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The Indian-Hunters. 103



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THE
INDIAN-HUNTERS:

OR,

THE MAIDENS OF IDAHO.

BY JAMES L. BOWEN,
AUTHOR OF POCKET NOVEL NO. 15, "THE GUNMAKER."

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THE INDIAN-HUNTERS.

CHAPTER I.

WESTWARD, HO!

"How far now to Wharbuton, driver?"

"Only about four miles."

"*Only* four; and here it is almost dark already! No mortal can tell how black it will be before we reach the place. If ever I go back to the States again, I'll enter a petition to Congress that stage-drivers be required to keep up with their time!"

The driver gave his long whip a crack, cast his eyes around into the gathering gloom, and then turned to the impatient traveler.

"Wharbuton is your destination, sir, I reckon," he said.

The young man bowed assent.

"Well, sir, seein' you've rode so far with me, I'll take the liberty of askin' ye if ye've friends, or any thing, at the village ahead. Seems ye're mighty anxious to git thar."

"So I am, driver, and I've a couple of good reasons for it. The first is, my only sister, the only near relative I have in the world, lives in Wharbuton. I haven't seen her in several years, and it is a natural consequence that when I get so near I should be rather impatient. Another good reason with me is, that I do not relish traveling after dark. These Indians have made so many murderous attacks during the summer, and done it with such comparative impunity, that I feel danger whenever the sun goes down.

"Oh, there is no danger of Indians," replied the driver, confidently. "I've drove this yere same express for more'n ten years, and never a red-skin did I see, savin' such as I've carried on the route, and that ain't sayin' much, for they ain't a kind of people that patronize transportation companies much.

But, let me see; you say you've a sister up here in Wharbuton. Seein' that I know most every body in the place, like enough I've seen or heard tell on her. What did you say her name was?"

"I did not say. But I can tell you. Her name is Fanny Bryant."

"Oh, yes! Wonder to know if she's *your* sister! Why, I've seen her for the last five or six years as often as once a week. Plaguey fine gal, sir! Wish *I* had such a sister to go and see, myself; 'twould be a fine change, from swingin' this long whip and sittin' cooped up on this box all day, like a monkey on a tree-top in a gale of wind."

The fellow laughed at his own similitude, and delivered a jet of tobacco-juice to leeward, with a triumphant air.

"You see, a stage-driver has got to know most every body," he continued. "But I always noticed Fanny Bryant, because she lived next door to the post-office, and every time I came in with the mail she would be there. 'Now,' she says, 'if you hain't brought me a letter from my brother off in the States, I'll have you arrested for treason,' or suthin' of that kind. Why, sir, it used to do my heart good to have her scold at me, for then it didn't seem so much as if I was a homeless kind of a chap. Yes, I've knowd Fanny Bryant a good while. I suppose, if you are her brother, your name must be Bryant, too."

"Yes, sir, my name is Maurice Bryant. I came out with father and Fanny when they settled here, and staid nearly a year, so you see I am not an entire stranger. But, I had the chills badly, and some matters at the East required my attention, and I went back to look after them. While I was there my father died; but, as I did not get the news for a month, and could be of no real assistance, I did not come back then. Fanny wrote me that she should live with Samuel Marsh till I came back, and I did not have any fears, for I knew what a good man Mr. Marsh was, and Fanny always loved his daughter, Ada, as though she had been her own sister. I made every preparation to come back, and supposed I had arranged all our affairs in the States so that there could be no misunderstanding. But, just as I was ready to set out upon my return, I was taken sick. Before I recovered, I found

some of the matters, which I had apparently disposed of, in litigation. Attending law-suits, seeing lawyers, and making a sure thing of all these affairs, occupied my time for almost three years. But I got through them at last, and now I am on my way to seek Fanny once more."

"Well, I don't wonder any that you are in something of a hurry," said the good-humored driver, who had listened to the brief narration with interest. "I feel lost when I don't see the girl myself, though it's only because she has such a pleasant way of speaking to an old chap like me."

"I like to hear you speak well of my sister," said Maurice. "I know that she gave promise of being a true-hearted, noble woman, when last I saw her. And I am so pleased to learn that she still continues thus. Mere physical beauty is nothing to goodness of heart."

"That's true for you, young man. But this same Fanny isn't in want of either one. You can take my word for that, in advance."

"I never considered Fanny especially beautiful," said Maurice, who remembered the careless, dark-skinned girl of three years before only as she had then appeared.

"But I tell you three years have made a great change in the girl's appearance, Mr. Bryant—a very great change. I consider there's no handsomer gal along the whole route of my drive than Fanny; and if you don't say she is a beauty when we get there, then I'll give you the fare—that's all. And I conclude it wouldn't be for your interest to say any thing to Walter Marsh about her bein' plain-lookin', even if you are her brother!"

"Walter Marsh—Samuel Marsh's son?"

"Yes."

"And is he—"

"You want to ask if he is keepin' company with your sister, eh? Well, he is; and a smart couple they make, too."

"I used to know Walter, passingly. I considered him an honorable young man three years ago."

"He is that same to-day, sir. If the gal was my sister—and it seems as though she were, almost—I'd as soon she married Walter as any young man in Wharbuton, or any other place!"

"Do they intend to marry, think you?"

"I reckon not at at present, though you can't hardly form an idee in sech matters. Bein' a bachelor myself, I don't feel competent to make a guess in the matter."

"If Walter is the right kind of a man for Fanny, I have no choice," said the brother. "She is nineteen now, and old enough to arrange for herself. I have strong aspirations for this sister of mine, and I want to see her well mated for life. Of course you do not blame me."

"Not a bit, sir; I honor you for it. But we'll soon be on the ground. You see that clump of oaks yonder—that is the three-mile point; always takes just half an hour from there in, though we don't often come along at this time of day."

It was so dark now that they could hardly discern the broad tract of oak openings which rose at the distance of four hundred yards. The young man, who sat upon the box with the driver, relapsed into silence, though he yet cast anxious glances about.

After the conversation we have recorded, it will need but a word of presentation to fully explain the appearance and personality of Maurice Bryant.

He was a tall, powerfully-built young man, well dressed, and of gentlemanly appearance. His hair, which was midnight black, hung in clustering masses about his shoulders, while a nicely-trimmed beard, and mustache of the same jetty hue, set off to advantage a strikingly handsome physiognomy. He had probably seen twenty-five or twenty-six years of life, and his general appearance bespoke a man of cultivated tastes.

The stage in which he rode was an open carriage, well adapted to the rough and muddy roads it was required to traverse. The sole object of the builder had been durability, and the result was such as to stamp him a thorough workman. Upon this occasion, the carriage was well filled, and by chance occupied solely by men. There were six of them in the body of the carriage, while Maurice Bryant sat upon the seat with the driver—eight in all.

It was the early autumn of 1865. The events of the past few months upon the plains of the far West had made every one cautious, and of those who composed the traveling party,

All save the tall, portly man, with a corporosity like an alderman, and a decidedly "*Hienglish haccent*," were armed for any emergency which might arise.

The scene was such as only our West can present. Broad plains, reaching further than the sphericity of the earth's surface allowed the human eye to reach, broken only by "rolls" of moderate size, and variagated with clusters of oak and walnut here, a thicket there, and perhaps a more extended portion of forest yonder.

One of the first-mentioned, an oak opening of some extent they were now approaching quite rapidly. The road was divided just before reaching the wood, one branch passing through the edge of the timber, the other leaving it some little distance to the right. The former was invariably used during the warm summer days, that man and beast might have the advantage of the cooling shade afforded by the heavy foliage, but as the latter was most direct, the driver turned not from his course.

"It seems to me that I see forms moving in the wood, yonder," Maurice remarked, pointing to the forest beside them.

The driver looked in the same direction, but it was so dark that nothing could be made out.

"I guess you don't see any thing," he remarked, a little carelessly, for he fancied his companion was getting nervous. "It may be that some teamster has put in there for the night, rather than take the risk of goin' further."

But Maurice Bryant was not perfectly satisfied. He knew that hostile Indians swarmed upon those plains, and he saw at a glance that they could ask for no better cover than that afforded by the timber in question. He kept his eye upon the belt of forest, and his hand upon the stock of a heavy revolver which he carried.

He was still gazing when the flash of a single gun from the cover broke upon the darkness, and a bullet whistled just over the heads of those in the stage!

"By heaven!" the driver exclaimed, "that says Injin, and it advises us to pull up, too!"

"Drive on, we may escape them!" said Maurice, hardly reflecting upon the feasibility of such an undertaking.

A tumult of voices was heard behind, each urging a different

course of action; but the driver heeded only his nearest companion. He applied the long whip, and the four horses sprang forward at the top of their speed.

In an instant a jet of flame burst from the timber, just abreast of them, and a half-dozen balls whistled around and among them. The driver uttered a cry and dropped his lines, while his right arm fell shattered to his side!

Maurice would have grasped the reins, and made an attempt to continue the flight, but he saw several horsemen riding down toward them, and he knew that flight was quite out of the question. The horses had been taught to stop whenever the lines were dropped, and they had done so now, though somewhat frightened by the firing.

Maurice at once sprung out, and took a position behind the vehicle, cocking his revolver as he did so.

"Come on, men," he said, in low, firm tones. "Form a line behind this stage, and defend yourselves; we can not flee!"

They followed his directions, with the exception of the Englishman, who threw himself upon the bottom of the vehicle, and began to lament.

"Oh, my blessed!" he gasped, "what hinduced me to leave the pale of civilization, hand come hoff 'ere hinto the wilder-ness, to be massacred by the Hinjings? My George! Hi wish Hi was hat 'ome, down cellar, heating turnips, that's what Hi do!"

The others had no time to heed his lamentations. They ranged themselves according to Maurice's direction, feeling that he was the man to lead them. With weapons resting over the top of the carriage, they awaited the onset.

But it did not come at once. Finding that they were likely to meet a warm reception, the savages stopped at a distance, beyond pistol-shot, firing their weapons without effect, and striking off on a circle.

"Ha, they think to take us in the rear," said Maurice. "Let them try it; we can work around as soon as they."

But he was speedily undeceived. The savages had a purpose, as he soon saw. There was less than a dozen of the horsemen, but behind them came a yelling rabble of red-skins, numbering two score at least. These were coming down

directly upon them, while those who were mounted worked around upon the opposite side, to prevent any escape.

Maurice comprehended the situation of affairs in a moment. He saw that there was but one way in which any of them could hope to escape the savages.

"Down, everyone," he said, in a low but intense voice. "There is no way that we can fight them. Let us scatter, and it is possible some of us may crawl away and escape. That is our only possible chance, and we may as well try it."

The men heeded his injunctions, some of them groveling upon the ground in abject fear, while others struck off with purposes in view, and courage to act upon them.

The Englishman pressed closer than ever to the bottom of the vehicle, and faintly exclaimed:

"My seven senses! You won't leave me 'ere halone to the tender mercies of the Hinjings, Hi 'ope. Hi shall has surely be killed has day!"

"Then do as the others are doing," was all that Maurice found time to say.

He espied the driver at that moment, who was sitting composedly upon the box, supporting his broken arm with the other hand.

"Never mind me," the fellow said, seeing Maurice hesitate. "The Injins will rob the stage, of course, but I don't think they will hurt me. Get out of the way if you can, for they are close at hand."

The young man cast a last look at his trunk, which contained the bulk of his earthly possessions, including many choice gifts which he had bought for Fanny. He did not relish the idea of leaving them all to the tender mercies of the red-men; but he could not avoid it, and with a quick motion, he threw himself into the tall grass which bordered the road.

The Indians were very near to them upon either hand, and the prospect of escape was quite dubious, to say the very least. Even as he moved from the abandoned coach, the young man saw one of his late companions stricken down and murdered by a savage, who had leaped from his horse for that purpose.

At first he thought of shunning the scene, for he had no

desire to see human blood flow. But a sudden idea possessed his mind. It had now become so dark that, at a little distance, it required a keen glance to tell a friend from a foe. The Indian had left his horse standing beside him while the diabolical deed was being done. Possibly he could secure the animal, and with its aid fly from the presence of the red robbers.

He crept up as near as he could to the animal and its scarcely more human rider, then rushed upon the savage and felled him to the ground with the breech of his pistol. There were savage riders all about him, and the risk was most imminent. Grasping the bridle, Maurice sprung upon the bare back of the animal, and made a dash for an opening in the scattered group of red-skins.

Only one of them seemed to notice the daring act, and he placed himself as nearly in the way as possible, swinging his hatchet as he saw the other coming. Maurice would not willingly have shed blood, but he saw no way in which it could be helped now, and placing his pistol near the red-skin's head, he pulled the trigger. Of course he rolled from his saddle like a block of wood, for the traveler was not one to miss his aim.

The result of the shot was two-fold. While it opened the way for him to flee, it drew the attention of all the savages who were not busily engaged with their own affairs. The young man threw himself low upon the horse's neck, and urged him forward with all possible speed. He was obliged to take a course at right angles to that he wished to pursue, but that was of little matter, for he could easily change his course when he had thrown off the pursuit!

A shout was raised, and several of the Indians turned their horses to follow him. Yet scarcely had they begun the pursuit when dark forms, close to the ground, began to fire away at the retreating horseman.

"Perhaps they will blaze away a while, and let me go," Maurice thought, as he observed that the horsemen did not follow at any great speed.

But his success and hopes were of short duration. Even as he gave shape to his ideas mentally, a ball from one of the muskets struck his horse with a dull "thud!" The animal,

rendered furious by the wound, became unmanageable in a moment, and Maurice had barely thrown himself upon the ground before the animal followed suit.

A shout of joy arose from his enemies as they saw the fall, and two or three rode forward to secure the prize. As they came up, the young adventurer presented his revolver, and shot dead the foremost, who was looking for the scalp-lock of the white.

A yell of fury followed this greeting, in which the sharp report of the pistol sent notice to tumble to another of the cowardly red-skins. The third, seeing the unseemly fate of his companions, set up a wild howl, and fell back from the fatal spot till others should come to the rescue. They were not slow, of course, for they could not let such a foe escape. Five or six, indeed all who were mounted, rode to the spot and looked for the fated foeman, who had already made such havoc in their ranks.

To their infinite surprise, there was neither white man nor signs of him—only a fallen horse and two dead Indians.

Another wild howl called many more, who were on foot, to the spot, and a vigorous search was commenced.

Maurice Bryant had felt like giving up all for lost when the horsemen made their attack; but when he saw that his determination not to submit had been crowned with so much success, and beheld the last horseman turn back, a new desire for escape prompted him to make another effort in that direction.

The grass, as already remarked, was quite rank, and, save that it had been occasionally run over by horses and cattle, it had suffered only from the dryness of the season. Into this Maurice plunged, and found that, by crawling upon his hands and knees, he was almost entirely hidden from sight. At least it would hardly be possible to see him in the darkness, unless at very close quarters.

He crawled away, using his few moments of vantage to the best possible account. By the time his pursuers had reached the place where they supposed him to be, he had gained such a distance that he could barely see their dusky forms through the gloom. He would have broken into a keen run, at that moment, had the nature of the ground been favorable; but it

was far from that, as the long grass might well trip a skillful runner, even at mid-day. He could only move by stealth, and hope to place a sufficient distance between himself and the Indians to allow him more freedom of movement.

Still he saw that the pursuit would not be readily given up, as the Indians sped in every direction, scouring the ground as they went. The horsemen radiated to assist the others on foot, and riding out a considerable distance, wheeled their horses and made their way back, moving in sharp angles, so as to scan every foot of the ground.

As they had passed Maurice by a considerable distance, and were now moving back toward him thus cautiously, while the savages on foot were fast approaching him behind, the young man's position was any thing but pleasant. Indeed, about his only hope lay in passing the horsemen. If he could not do this without attracting attention, his fate would in all probability be sealed.

He had watched their movements till satisfied that the thing was possible. He moved cautiously nearer to his vigilant enemies, crawling upon his face without the least noise or effort. He noticed the moment when the attempt must be made to insure success, and as the horseman whose beat he must pass turned his horse, Maurice crept rapidly forward.

Ten feet more and he would be safe! Was he to pass it?

Gradually he drew nearer and nearer. Five feet remained, and if he could pass that distance he would be safe from the return of the Indian. Surely he could accomplish that, very easily!

But at that very moment, when one minute more would have seen him over the line of demarcation, a sharp hiss, followed by a loud rattle, told that he had invaded the dominions of a deadly serpent! He paused and drew back at that most disgusting of all sounds, and looked for the source whence it had proceeded.

Before he could make any discoveries upon the subject under consideration, he found that he was likely to have assistance—more, in fact, than would be agreeable! The Indians had heard the warning, and they were hastening to the spot, quite certain that they should there find the object of their search.

CHAPTER II.

A BIRTHDAY PARTY.

UPON the borders of a pleasant, winding stream, which ran through the rich alluvial soil of one of our territories, a village had sprung up, named from the first settler, Wharbuton. It was very pleasantly situated, having more natural advantages than often fell to the lot of settlements of its class. There was an abundance of good water, plenty of fuel; and a steam saw-mill, store and blacksmith shop already had appeared. A project was on foot to found a church, which promised realization in the course of another season.

Near the center of the village, in a new framed house of considerable pretensions, dwelt Samuel Marsh and his family, consisting of a wife, a son, Walter, aged twenty-two, a daughter, Ada, whose twentieth year would be completed on that day, and several smaller children, with whom we have nothing to do at present. Fanny Bryant, the orphan sister of Maurice, also found a home under their pleasant roof.

As the honest stage-driver had said, Fanny was really a beauty, now that the honest roughness of girlhood had passed away, and the softer graces of womanhood set in. And the fact that she had plentiful possessions in the East, yielding a sure and sufficient income, was far from detracting from that beauty, in the eyes of that needy class of adventurers who follow every new movement, looking for some chance to "turn up" which will make them rich without the necessity of working for it.

But, as the driver had stated, Walter Marsh had been deeply impressed by the beauty of Fanny, coupled with her goodness of heart; and as he was a worthy young man, and she a sensible young woman, he had gradually won the field, first excluding all outside admirers, and then seeking the promise of her hand in marriage, as soon as he should be able to provide a home for her.

And so Fanny had become his promised wife, after a long

consultation with herself. She had no one else to consult, for she was alone in the world, save her brother, and he had written to her that he should be traveling for some time, and that she need not write until she heard from him again. She felt that her own heart was the best monitor, in any case, and so she decided, trusting to Maurice's good sense to approve her choice, when he should know the particulars.

But this night, of all others, was to be notable in the new dwelling of the Marshes. Ada, the sparkling blonde daughter, was to celebrate her birthday by giving a party—a real, genuine party! Not one of the costly fashionable *soirees* of the *élite* of the old States' society, but a real, honest, heartfelt gathering of all the young people of the settlement, and the invitations would have extended further, had it not been for the fact that there was not another inhabitant within several miles of Wharbuton.

The programme was not fully decided upon up to the time when the guests began to arrive, for matters will always be more or less affected by the circumstances. Dancing and cards were to be allowed; refreshments would be served by the "old people," who would also invite many of the other "old people" to join them at table. Beyond this the party were to suggest their own amusements.

Ada had donned her best dress and its belongings for the occasion, and we would state all about the material and style, only the author is so unfortunate as not to know. Be assured, then, that every thing had been arranged in the best possible manner for the occasion, and as darkness began to settle over the earth, both Ada and her sister-expectant, her dear friend Fanny, were all aglow with pleasure and fond anticipation.

One by one and two by two the guests began to arrive. Tall, broad-shouldered beaux, who, if they did some things not laid down in Chesterfield, possessed sincere hearts and strong arms, and could repel any insult or avert any ordinary danger from their beloved ones. And the maidens, if many of them wore dresses which might not pass the test of fashionable society, and all of them appeared without a waterfall, were beautiful and blooming—sufficiently so to put to shame any painted and powdered belle of the great cities.

The evening opened with a social promenade through the great house—for the dwelling was a marvel in Wharbuton. Then followed games and hearty greetings over those who happened to be a little late, and inordinate fun with the "old folks" who ventured within their reach.

Mirth and joy reigned in the mansion. Every face was filled with pleasure. Ada Marsh was in her glory. Fanny was quite as much delighted, and the three, Walter included, were every where, and at all times. Walter was not less delighted than the girls, and he had one cause of congratulation which they had not. The two loveliest in the rooms were those he accompanied, and was not one of them his affianced wife, and the other his sister?

Presently the company appeared to tire of that which had interested them at the commencement, and Ada whispered to Walter:

"Haden't we better begin dancing?"

"I suppose so," returned Walter, who, being the only fiddler in the place, was expected to furnish the music. "Purty early," he added; "make a feller's arm ache afore they git through; but then Jeff and I can go it."

"What's that?" demanded a tall, awkward-looking youth, of eighteen, known as Jeff Flagg. "Reekin we can make these 'ere new timbers crack, if there's any sich thing in the book. I've been to work on that old fiddle all day, and I've jest got its tone up splendid."

"Well, bring it over, Jeff, and we'll tune up."

Jeff departed, but soon returned bearing an antiquated violincello, which must have been ancient when he who carried it was born. This instrument was his especial pride, and for weeks the twain had been practicing the music which was to give zest to the present occasion.

A little platform, a foot above the floor, was formed for the musicians, who immediately set about "tuning up," an incipience that took some time, during which the dancers paired off and arranged for a contra-dance.

"Now then, give 'em smoke," said Jeff, as he rolled up his shirt-sleeves and braced himself to the old instrument.

"All ready!" and away they went, fiddlers, dancers, and lookers-on.

Heated and dizzy with their unusual exercise, the dancers finally whirled away to their seats, and, after a short respite, re-formed for a cotillion. Walter and Jeff gave their right arms a vigorous rubbing, and then the music struck up again.

But just as the dancers began to move, a terrible tumult without, cries and shouts, and the reports of fire-arms, broke upon the still evening air. For a moment those joyous ones paused, uncertain what had happened, and the voice of a Stentor, as he fled swiftly through the street, announced the terrible visitation.

"INJINS! INJINS!" he shouted. "Look out for your hair, if you want it saved!"

"Injins! Injins!" was repeated on every hand, and looks of horror quickly took the place of pleasure. Walter dropped his violin, and Jeff his violincello; the former sprung for his rifle, and rushed to the front door, and the latter left all and fled by the back way. Some of the women fainted; all cried and flew wildly from side to side, neither knowing what to do themselves, nor allowing others time to think.

Walter rushed to the door with the intention of giving battle to the first savage he met, but a rifle-ball passing close to his head as he appeared caused him to change his tactics. He quickly shut and barred the door, for in moments of trial he was a young man of nerve and self-possession. He saw that the savages were in too great numbers to be fought by any force which Wharbuton could raise, even if warned and prepared in advance of their coming. Of course there would be no other way than to escape their presence, if possible. So long as no overt act called their attention to that particular house, it was possible that the Indians would not disturb them till such time as the females could be gotten away.

Hastening back to the room where he had left the dancers, Walter found confusion worse confounded. Howling, sobbing and praying were strangely blended, with more than one blasphemous oath from the rougher portion of the swains. Stamping with his foot to command attention, the youth exclaimed, in decided tones:

"This way, every one! We can't fight 'em; we must run if possible. Come, let the wimmin folks git out fast, and we fellers will bring up the rear!"

He pushed one and another before him toward the rear entrance, repeating his instructions to each in turn. He had succeeded in removing about one half of the inmates, and had just joined Ada and Fanny, who stood a little apart, more composed than any others of their sex in the room, when he saw Barney Brooks, a blustering fellow, proceeding toward the front entrance.

"Where are you going, Barney?" he demanded, having a suspicion of the truth.

The fellow had procured a rifle by some means, and the reckless expression of his features showed that he intended to use it.

"Whar *should* I be goin'?" he demanded, rather insolently, "if it wa'n't to show them red-skins that we ain't all cowards in here?"

He glanced at Fanny a little defiantly as he uttered the words, for he had once been a suitor for the maiden's favor; but as his character and conduct were such that no respectable woman would care for his society, he had been summarily dismissed.

"Do not shoot until the savages commence an attack here!" said Walter, hurrying after the reckless braggadocio.

"I ain't afeard of 'em!" he responded, with a growl.

"Neither am I," returned the youth. "But, we must consider that these women can't take care of themselves as we can. Wait till we git them away, and by that time I fancy we'll have all the fightin' we shall want."

"Oh, pshaw! you're afraid, Walt.; you never was made for a fighter! Go in and see to the women, while I give the reds a shot!"

"I'm not afeard, Barney, and you know very well I am not. But I tell you not to draw down the savages upon this house. You shall not fire—"

"Sha'n't, eh?" The fellow spoke a little threateningly, and moved a pace nearer to Walter, but seeing the young man did not quail, he proceeded to unbar and open the door.

"I won't shoot if ye feel so bad about it," he said, sneeringly. "I jest want to look out and see how the land lies, any way. You can't blame a feller for that."

He opened the door and peered out. The street was

swarming with Indians, who were busy in their fell work of devastation and plunder.

Quick as thought, Barney raised his rifle and fired. An Indian fell to the ground with a shriek. The fellow endeavored to close the door, but in this he failed. With a rush the savages burst upon it, and bore back the two men who struggled resolutely against them.

Walter assisted his faithless companion till the savages were within the building, and then, seeing further effort to be vain, he turned and sought Ada and Fanny, whom he had left with the intention of staying Brooks' suicidal purpose.

"I warned him," thought the youth, "and I helped him all I could. If he loses his life I shall not be responsible. I sha'n't be blameable, neither."

He found the two maidens standing quite alone, and in anxious waiting for him, all the others having finally found their senses, or having been taken away by more clear-headed friends.

"Quick!" he exclaimed, pointing out the way, "The Indians are in the house—we must run for it!"

They were not slow to obey, and had just left the room they were in when a brawny warrior entered. He looked about, concluded that the house was deserted, and began to pillage.

On reaching the open air, Walter found that the prospect for flight was not very inviting, even by this route. Several buildings had been fired, and the light from them rendered distinct the whole of the gentle slope leading down to the brook. Upon the opposite side of the stream was a small strip of wood, which had been partially cut down, and toward this Walter had intended to direct the flight of himself and companions. This slope was already covered with fugitives and Indians, the former begging for mercy and endeavoring to flee—the latter robbing and murdering them at will, without resistance.

Clearly this was no place for our little party of fugitives. While they paused for a moment in doubt, Walter heard the movement of feet coming around the house. He had barely time to draw his companions back into the doorway, when three savages made their appearance. At first he had hoped

that they would pass, but the dress of one of the maidens attracted their notice.

"Ugh!" exclaimed one, stopping short and pushing his head in at the door; "what we got here?"

He was not left in doubt, for the sturdy youth's rifle descended upon the exposed head with terrible force. The savage dropped to the floor, and one of his companions stumbled over his body. By the movement he avoided the sweeping blow which Walter had aimed at him, and in turn he grasped the young man. The struggle which ensued was terrific. Neither of the combatants had a weapon in hand, and neither of them found time to produce one.

Back and forth they swayed, hither and thither, now one, and then the other seeming to have a momentary advantage. The Indian was strong, heavy, and well used to athletic encounters. Walter was young, sinewy, very active and enduring. His wind proved the better of the two in the result, and he finally gained the victory over his red adversary.

The savage was effectually disposed of, and Walter felt no weak scruples; he turned to look for the remaining Indian. He had disappeared. And not alone. Ada and Fanny were gone too!

Filled with a terrible anxiety, the young man darted into the house, first taking possession of his rifle. He encountered a single savage, whom he dashed to the floor, but saw no signs of the missing maidens. From room to room he sped, giving no thought to his own safety, heedless of the number of foes he might encounter.

He had passed almost through when he encountered the form of a white man. The lamp, which still burned upon a mantel, revealed the features of Barney Brooks. Both started at the meeting, for each had supposed the other in the hands of the savages or killed.

"Is that you, Barney?" demanded Walter. "Have you seen the girls?"

"What ones?"

"Ada and Fanny."

"No. Where are they?"

"Heaven only knows; I don't."

He related, in as few words as possible, the unfortunate

chance which had befallen him in the attempt to flee, and the unlooked-for disappearance of the maidens. Ready for any adventure, however rash, Barney at once joined him in the search, and all that men could do toward learning the fate of the missing ones was done. But it was all to no purpose. They could not find them, neither could they find any one who had seen them.

The moon had now risen, and begun to shed its soft light over the scene. The Indians, as if satisfied with their depredations, the amount of plunder and number of lives they had taken, began to leave the burning settlement, as if by concerted action. In a short time not one of the lawless robbers was to be seen.

Walter and his strange companion had continued the search for the missing ones, meanwhile. They had visited all possible places of refuge, and invariably met the same response from those there congregated. Not one had seen or heard of them since parting in the house where they had been holding festivities. Every man at once joined cheerfully in the search, and the ground was carefully gone over—every corpse and every conceivable hiding-place being examined.

Morning light came at length, and the search was abandoned in despair. Every other missing person had been found; the bodies of the murdered were arranged in decent order for burial, and the smoldering fires extinguished. One half of the village lay in ruins—nearly a third of the inhabitants lay prepared for that narrow house which awaits great and small, high and low, alike!

It was a gloomy morning for the people of Wharbuton, for to every family came misfortune and bereavement. But to none had the visitation come with more blighting power than to the household of Samuel Marsh. Those two joyous, light-hearted, laughing maidens of the evening before—not the pride of their family alone, but of the whole village—where were they? Though they found upon reassembling that their loss had been trifling, yet the fearful incubus which hung over them shut in like a black pall aught of joy or hope which remained.

Walter sat with his head bowed upon his hands, like one in blank despair; but such were not his feelings. He was forming

a deep and holy resolve within his own heart, and silently beseeching that Power which he revered, for strength to carry out the plan he was forming.

At length he rose, and approached his mother.

"Mother," he said, "I am goin'. It's no use, I can't stay here any longer, and I'm goin' to make an effort."

"Where are you going, my boy?" she asked, raising tear-filled eyes to his face. "Is it not enough that Ada is gone, and Fanny, too; and now you will leave us, perhaps never to return?"

"It is too much that they are gone, mother; and I am going to find them. They must have been taken away by the Indians, and I am sure they can be brought back. I am goin' to try it, any way!"

"Walter, Walter!" the good mother exclaimed, filled with horror at the thought. "You foolish boy! Why will you think of such a thing? You will surely be killed, Walter, and then we shall be desolate indeed!"

But Walter used his persuasions to such a degree that he soon silenced his mother's opposition, and then prepared for the enterprise. He took his trusty rifle, with sufficient ammunition for any ordinary occasion, and a long, keen bowie-knife, for all work which might require silence and a sharp edge in its execution. Adding a moderate supply of food, he started out.

In the street he met Barney Brooks, rifle in hand.

"Whar' ye bound?" he demanded, stopping before the youth.

At first Walter felt like prevaricating, for he had an especial dislike for the reckless braggart, but he concluded to tell the truth, little suspecting the effect which the announcement would have upon his interlocutor.

"Good on yer head!" he exclaimed. "I begin to think you're a bully boy, arter all. I'll go with ye—blamed if I won't! I know it is a hopeless kind o' undertakin', but I like a feller with grit, and I'm bound to help you through with this affair."

Walter would have much preferred to travel alone, but he could not dissuade the other, who insisted upon bearing him company. Finally the youth recollected the many tales he

had heard of Barney's scouting prowess, and he decided to let the fellow accompany him.

"Hev' ye got a pistol?" Barney demanded, as they reached the confines of the village.

"Nothing but this rifle and knife," was the reply.

"I've got a couple of as fine revolvers as ever snapped," returned Brooks, producing one of them and a box of cartridges. "Here, you take one, 'cause I don't want to stan' any better chance than you."

The youth took the weapon and placed it in his belt, merely assuring himself that it was in order for use.

CHAPTER III.

AMONG THE INDIANS.

MAURICE BRYANT was no coward, and yet it caused him a chill of horror, which penetrated even to his bones, when he heard the loathsome warning of the serpent, and realized how near he had been, or might still be, to his deadly bite. He started to his feet, in utter disregard of the presence of his enemies, and, seeing how impossible escape would be, awaited whatever fate might have in store for him.

The Indians set up a loud shout as they saw his form rise from the earth, and every moment he expected to hear the report of some weapon which should bespeak his death. But the savages were not so thirsty for his blood as Maurice had supposed. They seemed to have a preference for taking him bodily.

They found little difficulty in making the capture. Bryant waited till he was assured that they did not intend to harm him at once, then slipped his revolver into his boot, where it might be handy for use at some future time, if not discovered, and awaited the capture with folded arms.

The savages approached him with great caution, for the loss they had already suffered from his single arm had been severe. Three warriors had been shot and mortally wounded,

If not killed outright, while a fourth lay beside the stage with a broken head. Their own treacherous natures feared deceit in others, but the temptation to take him alive overcame even their fears.

Finally a tall brave sprang forward, and grasped Maurice about the loay, exclaiming as he did so:

"You oig white man; me got you now!"

"I see you nave," was the nonchalant rejoinder. "Now what do you suppose you will do with me?"

"Waugh! Me take you home—give you to Eagle Nose. Big chief; him keep you, maybe; maybe burn you up!"

"Maybe, too, that I shan not go with you," said Maurice, who had made up his mind as to the course he would pursue. "Perhaps I shall hurt you!"

He noticed that the Indian was not holding him as closely as he might have done, and with a quick wrench of his body he freed himself from the grasp, and wheeling at the moment he found himself free, knocked down the savage with a powerful blow of his fist.

A yell arose from those around, and weapons were brandished in plenty. But finding the white made no effort to escape they became peaceable, and several of the strongest in the party advanced with thongs of dried skin to bind him. Bryant did not resist any more, or rather the little resistance he made was in such a singular manner that it availed him nothing, save as it confused his enemies.

Now he whistled, then he danced, anon he sung, and finally whistled and danced simultaneously. Then he would wheel and attempt to strike or kick those who stood in his reach. Then more of the music and dancing, followed by an attempt to butt down any red-skin who presented himself. Beneath all this there was a deep purpose. The more strangely he acted, the more curiosity it would excite from the Indians, and the more chance would there be for saving his life.

At first the savages seemed to doubt the character of the strange being they had captured, and even seemed to wonder if he belonged to the ordinary race of man; but presently one of them seemed to entertain an idea, and proceeded to convey it in gutturals to his fellows.

Maurice said not a word, but stood there, keenly alive to

all that passed about him, carrying out any freak which entered his head, so far as was possible in his confined state. Whatever the communication which was circulated so industriously might be, or what effect it was likely to have upon his fortunes, Maurice could not determine.

Presently his captors took up a line of march, and half a dozen of them conducted him away into the oaks, while the balance of the party returned to the captured stage-coach. He would have much preferred to accompany the latter, and learn if possible the fate which had befallen his traveling-companions; but it could not be, and he would not mar the scheme he had in view by any apparent anxiety to do so.

He was taken into the timber some distance, and here he found that the Indians had established their head-quarters. He was conducted to a staid, swarthy red-skin, who sat in grim silence, surrounded by half a score of ready and respectful menials.

One of the party who accompanied the young prisoner proceeded to report to this personage, whom Maurice now understood to be the military leader of the gang, perhaps the chief of the tribe. In either case Maurice noticed how much of military leadership they had learned from the whites. But he was soon to learn another innovation the red-man had made upon the customs of his forefathers.

Under a strong guard, the prisoner was led up to the feet of this surly-looking individual, and a lighted pine knot was brought, that the chief, of what ever rank he might be, could scan his features by its light.

"Now," began his Indianship, "me goin' to ask you some questions. White man must say truth, for Hawk's Wing can read it all."

He waited a suitable time for a reply, but received none, save that Maurice commenced to whistle and keep step with his music upon the grassy sward. This proceeding puzzled the staid Hawk's Wing not a little, and he called upon one of the guards for an explanation. But this did not seem to clear away the mystery in the least. When the prisoner became a little more calm, the Indian proceeded with his questioning.

"You know we are going to take back the land our fathers

gave your fathers?" he said, with an earnestness which led Maurice to believe him sincere in the thought that it could be done very easily.

But the young man did not choose to exchange ideas with his captors. He threw back his head and gave vent to a flow of song, such as had probably never entertained an Indian audience before. Naturally possessing a fine voice, Maurice made the old wood echo with the strains of a popular New England song. The Indians looked on in surprise, and finally some of them ventured a little approval.

Hawk's Wing did not share in the latter. He evidently had a suspicion that all was not as it should be. He called one of his attendants to him, and the prisoner saw that a demonstration was about to be made for the purpose of testing his sanity. He nerved himself to calmness, and continued his singing, shifting from tune to tune every few moments.

Presently a burly savage sprung from the circle, grasped the white by the hair, and ran his knife quickly around the scalp, giving it a smart pull. The operation was quite painful, but Maurice scarcely winced. He stopped his singing, and, in a doleful voice, exclaimed:

"Ain't you ashamed of yourself? I won't sing any more for you!"

Then, walking away to a little distance, which operation was not interfered with by the Indians, he struck up, in the most agonizing tones possible:

"Hark, from the tomb, a doleful cry."

It was, indeed, a doleful cry which he sent up; even the savages stopped their ears at the sound. Thinking he had sung quite enough, Maurice sank upon the ground, and commenced muttering to himself in a low tone. One of the Indians sprung forward, whirling a tomahawk about his head, but Bryant paid no attention, muttering to himself the while, and nodding his head mysteriously.

The Indians seemed satisfied, now, that their prisoner was really a lunatic, and a consultation was held as to what should be done with him. Of course Maurice did not understand the gutturals in which they communicated with each other, and his suspense during the council was far from agreeable. But knowing very well that he could not help

himself just then, he put on a look of indifference and unconcern, throwing himself upon the ground as though to sleep.

He had not lain there long when he was roused up, and politely informed by the Indian who stood over him that he must now go and see Eagle Nose.

"Not a very fancy name," the youth thought, repeating it to himself. "But he may be a beauty. I'll go up and see—that is, if I can't help it."

He soon found that there would be but limited opportunities for escape. The horses had been cut loose from the stage-coach, such articles of plunder as the Indians fancied taken from the trunks and persons of the travelers, and made into bundles. These had been loaded upon the horses as none but an Indian could load them, and there was still one bundle for which no means of transportation appeared. Probably to this fact Maurice owed his life. He was selected to bear the extra pack, which was fastened to his back despite the many protestations he made to the contrary.

The march was almost immediately taken up, and continued without any halt till daybreak. The pack which had been placed upon the prisoner's shoulders was not heavy, and he found little inconvenience from it.

As he trudged along, a thousand hopes and purposes filled his mind, only to be thwarted by the vigilance of his captors. When morning came they stopped in the edge of a forest, built a fire, and roasted some pieces of horse-flesh which they had with them. Maurice had been suffered to lie down and rest a short time, while these preparations were going on; but one guard, and at times two, stood over him, prepared to kill him at the slightest move which they conceived to indicate escape.

Still he managed to reach his revolver with the fingers of one hand, without notice, and slightly change its position. It was not a comfortable filling for his boot-leg; but he preferred to suffer considerable pain before parting with it. He had hopes that the weapon might assist him some time. He would have made the attempt even now, when his arms were untied to eat the roasted meat his guards condescended to give him; but it was several minutes before he could use them, and the time thus employed gave him an opportunity to see

how rash the attempt would prove, and what would be the consequence of failure.

So he ate his meat in silence, suffered his arms to be bound and jogged on peacefully. At noon the party stopped, and, after eating a few mouthfulls, prepared for a general sleep. They were in a dark, secluded dell, near to a mountain range, and the prisoner persuaded himself to the belief that here he could effect the desired escape. Here, at least, he would have an advantage over the horses, if he could but gain the mountains. He would not regard several days' wandering, if he had but the shadow of a hope.

But the Indians had foreseen all these possibilities, and Maurice's heart leaped into his throat as he saw them approaching him with ropes. He felt sure that they intended to bind his legs, and if they did this he might say "farewell" to the weapon he had carried so long. But his revolver was safe. Fastening a rope around his neck, they tied it to a tree, and then proceeded to secure his hands in like manner.

All his hopes were pretty thoroughly nipped now, and thus they left him, to lament and consider, while they slept. For two hours an entire silence reigned.

But the savages could not afford to waste much time in sleep. They had still a long distance to traverse, and their plunder was far too valuable to be recaptured by the whites. They got under way as soon as possible, and traveled till nightfall, when they stopped again for a short time. Supper was eaten and pipes smoked; then they set out once more.

Maurice was well tired by this time, but he refrained from any expression of the feeling, and shouldered his pack with a sinking heart. Every long, weary mile was so much to be traversed on his return, if return was to come. After all, he could not help the thought that he was being taken away to his doom; that he had beheld kindred and friends for the last time, and much more of the same sort, which was far from giving buoyance to his spirits.

It was near morning when they reached the Indian town which had been their destination. It was a rough, dirty place, as Maurice could see, by the light of the waning moon, and he judged from the manner in which it was built up that it had been intended only as a temporary stopping-place. The

huts were thrown together carelessly, betokening want, poverty and laziness.

The barking of dogs excited the attention of a single sleepy guard, and at once the news of the arrival went through the town like fire. Squaws and papooses flocked forth, but to Maurice's gratification, he observed next to no warriors. He fancied, and quite correctly, that the majority of them were away upon the war-path.

Here, however, the redoubtable Eagle Nose ruled the people of his tribe, and here Bryant would be incarcerated for the present. How soon he might be led forth to a fearful doom, he dared not think. He was at once shut up in a rude, but very strong log hut, which was barred heavily on the outside.

It was dark within the cabin, perfectly so, for it had been constructed for some purpose requiring very little light, and, judging from the smell, no ventilation. At best, these requirements had been overlooked, and as Maurice could do nothing to his own satisfaction till he should have an inkling of what was before and about him, he threw himself upon the earth near the entrance, and, before he was aware of it, slept soundly.

When he awoke, which must have been very soon, for it was not light yet, it was by some one shaking at his arm, and when he had raised himself, a savage grunted in his ear:

"Come 'long; Eagle Nose want to see you!"

Wondering what the chief could want of him, Maurice rose to his feet with some difficulty, for he was sore and lame from the adventures of the past few days. He was conducted to a cabin equally miserable with the others, and only distinguished from them by a thick mat spread over the floor, which, of course, was in a more horrible condition of filth than the floor could have been without it. As the latter consisted of the bare earth, trampled hard, the expediency of matting, save as a mark of rank, was not so apparent to the young man's mind.

But he was left little time for meditating upon such matters of secondary importance. Eagle Nose had sent for him, and he had business with him. He had heard that the man who

brought the pack was a singular being, probably a demented person, and he was curious to see him.

The chief was sitting upon a bear-skin when the prisoner was brought in, but at once arose and approached him. Feeling carefully of his arms and legs, the chief walked all about the white man, looking in his eyes, and regarding him so minutely that Maurice began to tire of it, for he feared his boots would be subjected to a test, and to this he had an especial di-like.

But the chief did not fancy the travel-worn "patents," and stepped back a few paces, shaking his head and muttering something which Maurice did not understand, but which he fancied might be to the import that he did not seem essentially different from ordinary human beings.

"Pale-face, what bring you here?" he suddenly demanded, in sharp tones.

Maurice had prepared for this beforehand, and no sooner had the words passed the chief's mouth than he struck into a dance, spinning round and round till he verily felt giddy. From this he changed into a loose, shuffling movement, in which he contrived to kick the shins of a guard quite forcibly.

"Stop! stop!" commanded the chief, raising a hatchet with a threatening movement, while "stop! stop!" was echoed in fainter tones from the roof of the cabin.

The chief was the one to pause, and he looked to see who had dared to mock his royal commands. But there was no one to be seen, either within or upon the outside.

Maurice stopped and threw himself upon the floor, where he had stood, disgusting as its condition had been. Here he muttered to himself, as he had done upon a previous occasion, and with considerable effect, for he had noticed that the chief and guards looked perplexed.

The former made some observation in Indian gutturals to his attendants, and as he ceased speaking, the last words were repeated slowly from the door! Eagle Nose rushed forward, hatchet in hand, ready to brain the audacious intruder, but no person appeared! More and more perplexed, the swart chief fell back to his bear-skin, and held a whispered consultation with those present.

Of course he was indebted to Maurice for the inexplicable sounds he had heard. In early years he had been quite skilled in ventriloquism, and had been able to astonish more than one practiced performer by his wonderful command of voice. Possibly he might yet preserve his life by its possession.

The Indians all seemed in doubt whether this strange echo had been the result of some dark power possessed by the prisoner, but they agreed that he was an extraordinary person. It was finally decided to send for the medicine-women of the tribe, and it was done at once.

They came, two old and wrinkled hags, whom Maurice pronounced the worst specimens of humanity he had ever gazed upon. The chief informed them of his wishes at once, and with mumbled sentences they came toward him. Very fortunately for the youth, he had not one particle of superstition about his nature.

The hags were very near him when the fierce squeaking of a pig beneath the feet of one caused her to cry out, and spring to one side, only to disclose the bare mat, of course. With every movement the affrighted ones made came a fresh burst of pork music, now under one, then beneath the other, till both of them fled around the room in dismay, and finally sought safety without. At the same moment the squeals began in the vicinity of Maurice. He sprung to his feet, whistled loudly, and commenced to dance. All became still in a moment.

The chief uttered a hurried command to his followers, and the young man was at once led away to his prison. It was evident he had made an impression, but not so evident how it would result.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW IT WORKED.

THE *Indians* who had charge of Maurice Bryant, looking within to see that all was right, thrust him in, barring the door as soon as possible. The young man listened till their footsteps died away, and then began to look around.

The light of day penetrated just sufficiently to disclose the bare outlines of the place; in fact, that was about all there was to disclose. The four walls had been thrown up very strongly, and bedaubed with mud to stop the crevices. The purpose for which it had been built and used, if used it had been, remained a mystery.

The roof had been formed of bark, which had warped and cracked very much, but had been too firmly fastened to fall off until it should become decayed. The door was built of heavy, rough planks, evidently riven from the log with axes.

It was firm, and when the young man threw himself against it with all his strength, there was not the slightest effect produced. He walked all about the four walls, carefully running his eyes over the surface, and when he reached the point whence he had started, one thing was very plainly demonstrated to him:

His only hope of escape was through the roof.

Rather a slender hope it seemed to a man with his arms bound behind him, in an Indian town, with fifty miles of country—strange to him, though familiar to his enemies—between himself and any white man.

The first thing to be considered—for Maurice had determined upon escape—was to ascertain if it would be practicable for him to leave the place by daylight. He walked about it again, peering through the crevices, and noting carefully the surroundings upon each side.

He found that it faced the village upon three sides, which of course shut off all hopes in those directions. But upon the fourth ran a brook, dashing madly along, while beyond

rose a dark forest. The young man felt his strength renewed by the prospect. If he could but place himself beyond that stream of water, he felt that he would in reality defy any attempt of the savages to bring him back.

While he was engaged in these reflections, and peering anxiously through the chinks, the sounds of unbarring the door reached his ears. Quick as thought he turned to meet the intruder, for he had no wish to give them an inkling of his plans.

He was gratified at finding that it was only a guard of Indians bringing in his breakfast. They bore it upon a broad slab of wood, which they deposited upon the earthen floor and then one of their number stepped forward to unbind his arms. The prisoner could hardly contain himself as he realized this piece of good-fortune. The most important barrier to his success was thus removed. He knew that a trusty weapon reposed in his boot, and he determined to take a desperate chance before submitting to be rebound.

But he was not necessitated to take any such measure. The savages set his arms free, and then left him with the injunction 'eat.'

"I wonder what scheme they've got in their heads now," he mused, as the red-men barred the door from without. "But whatever their scheme may be, I fancy one of the principal actors will be missing. Let me see what they have provided for food, and then I can try my little plan."

He found the provisions intolerable enough, but he managed to pick out some morsels which he could eat, and after this was done, he removed the pistol from his boot, and slipped it into a pocket, convenient for use.

His next movement was to survey very carefully the surface of the ground over which it would be necessary for him to pass. It was important that he should know every move which he should be obliged to make, and he also wished to be sure that none of the red-skins were upon the look-out in that direction.

To reach the roof and remove sufficient of the bark to allow him egress was no small task. Indeed very few men, comparatively speaking, could have done it, had their lives depended upon it. But Maurice was no ordinary man, and

had no ordinary reason for exertion. Placing his toes in one of the chinks between the logs, and his fingers in another, he slowly worked his way upward until he had reached the roof.

But here it required some time to enable him to effect a footing. This he finally did, by patient and careful efforts. Now for the roof. He found this more of a task than he had anticipated. The bark had been fastened down firmly, and, though warped and cracked by sun and storm, it still retained its strength and adhered firmly. Maurice glanced along the entire extent of the overhead covering upon that side, but it appeared weakest at the very point where he stood.

He braced himself as much as possible, applied his hand to one of the pieces, and lifted cautiously. It bent, but did not break. Again and again he repeated the effort, and was gratified by partial success. The bark parted with a dull crack, and he felt the pure air of heaven fanning his brow **once more!**

Still the opening was not sufficiently large for his egress, and he busied himself by breaking away pieces, till it was of the proper size. Meanwhile he had been scanning the route he proposed to take, from his elevated position, and hardly noticed any thing transpiring near him.

Great was his surprise, therefore, when, on pushing his head through the aperture he had made, he observed an Indian just below him, with musket presented. The young man hesitated but a moment. Escape he must, quietly if possible, by force if need be.

"Go back!" the Indian exclaimed, making a threatening movement with his gun.

Maurice went back, far enough to shield himself while he pulled out his revolver and cocked it. Then he looked forth and watched the savage's movements. Thus far the Indian had made no effort to arouse his fellows, but he suddenly recollected himself, and gave vent to a fearful whoop of warning!

The yell was answered, and the prisoner could hear the movement of feet in the village. What he did must be done **quickly.**

The Indian was so occupied by giving the alarm that he

rather disregarded the movements of the escaping prisoner: Maurice saw it, and acted upon it. Raising himself quickly above the topmost log, he brought his pistol down within six feet of the Indian's head, and pulled the trigger. There was the sound of a falling body almost simultaneous with the report of the weapon, but the other did not stop to notice the work he had done.

Raising himself as quickly as possible through the opening, Maurice sprung to the ground, alighting without injury, though the walls of the hut were high. Having previously marked out the course he would pursue, and assuring himself that none of his enemies were in sight before him, he sprung boldly across the stream, scrambled up the rocky bank upon the opposite side, and entered the forest.

A confused rabble of squaws and papooses and two warriors burst into sight as he was ascending the bank, but so great was the tumult among them, that before the latter could raise their pieces, Maurice was dodging through the trees. They fired, however, one of the balls striking a tree, the other whistling away harmlessly through the forest.

Looking back he saw that both of them were in hot pursuit, while the multitude were following behind. He feared that he should not be able to keep pace with them in flight, but he knew their guns were empty, and had no fears of the result in a close encounter.

In a few moments he came to a ravine, and thither he entered, trusting to good fortune and his charged revolver to bring him out safely. The Indians separated, one running upon either bank, and Maurice saw in a short time that they were gaining rapidly upon him. Even now they were almost abreast of him.

For the youth to halt and fire at the one upon his left, who was almost directly above him, was but the work of a moment, and the savage received the ball in his leg, putting him *hors du combat* pretty effectually.

The other, hearing the report and very probably supposing the fugitive's means of resistance exhausted, came plunging down the bank, brandishing his hatchet and yelling with all the fury of a demon. But that which had arrested the career of his companion put a stop to his own.

He traveled for some time, until he fancied that at least five miles must be placed between himself and the Indian village. It had taxed him severely, and he began to feel more and more the effects of his long march in coming thither.

He was moving along at a tolerable pace, keeping a sharp look-out on all sides, when he saw a dusky figure glide behind a tree at considerable distance. While he stood watching the spot, an idea occurred to him that he had better seek shelter himself. He accordingly stepped behind a tree, still keeping his gaze fixed upon that occupied by the stranger. A moment later the barrel of a gun appeared, followed by the scalp-lock of an Indian.

Maurice did not wait to see more, but marked another tree standing in the same line some distance behind him, and throwing himself upon the ground, began to crawl rapidly toward it. A shot from behind plowed up the dirt close beside him. Evidently he had exposed a portion of his body, and thus drawn the fire of the savage. He looked quickly behind, and saw, not one, but five or six Indians coming rapidly down upon him.

As he started to flee, the savages commenced firing, one at a time, and very deliberately. It cost the fugitive a shudder to hear the messengers rush past him, every one very close, and one or two tearing his clothing; but, by a singular good chance, not one struck his person.

Bryant soon found that he was not long to maintain that which he had gained. He lost ground at every pace, and already could hear the hard breathing of the Indians behind. They had emptied their guns, and, without stopping to reload them, bent all their energies to running down the white.

The latter, indeed, felt certain that his last moment had come. His strength was failing rapidly; in a few moments he would be helpless, and at the mercy of his enemies. Would it not be better to make all the resistance possible while he had strength?

With a quick movement he stopped, and turned to meet the exultant Indians.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE TRAIL.

WALTER MARSH and Barney Brooks traveled along together in silence for some time. Each had feelings as opposite from the other as were the motives which prompted them to undertake the pursuit.

The former felt only the purest and most honorable impulses. He would peril his life, lay it down, if need be, to save his sister and her whom he loved even more dearly, from a dreadful captivity. He had counted the cost, and was determined to persevere to the end.

Barney, ever rash and impulsive, had only undertaken the adventure from mere love of excitement, and perhaps the more freely to exercise his bad passions in the forest. Added to these motives, that he had long sought vainly to please and win the regard of the maidens, paying suit to one and then to the other, it may be that a little jealousy combined to prompt his coöperation. It would please his selfish nature to assist in setting them free from the power of the Indians, for then he would certainly have a pretext to force his attentions upon them. He could then plead *gratitude*, which he knew would be a powerful plea to either of the maidens, since he knew their generous natures well.

They followed the traces of the Indians till they reached the place where the stage had been robbed the night before. Here a fearful sight met their eyes. The dismantled vehicle was the first to attract their attention. Both of them comprehended the situation in a moment. A dead body lying close beside it came next. Another was in it, that of the unfortunate Englishman, who had fallen an easy victim to the merciless wretches.

"This 'ere is the driver," said Barney, lifting up the form upon the ground so as to view his features. A good feller he was. It is too bad that they should knock over so decent a man!"

Scattered around through the grass he found three other forms, stiff and cold! Of those who had been in the stage at the time of its capture, only two could have escaped, and it was more than probable that they were lying out in the grass beyond.

"Cruel, cruel," murmured Walter, shocked beyond measure at what he saw. "The coach robbed—passengers all massacred—horses stolen. It is dreadful, Barney, dreadful!"

"Well, well," growled Barney, "don't git womanish over it. You'll see many a wuss sight afore you git up to the Injun town and back! Come, let's go up into these oaks, and see what the villains cut up there."

They found traces of their stay and general rendezvous, too plain to admit of any doubt. It only remained to seek the route they had taken in departing. This was very soon found, and after examining carefully in the vicinity, the adventurers came to the conclusion that they could have been gone no more than two hours, if so long.

"True we don't see any traces of the gals," remarked Barney, running his eyes along the route, as he had done since leaving Wharbuton. "But that is all nateral enuff. Course they was took on ahead, maybe on hosses, far's what we know. Then them what comes along ahind 'll cover up their trail, anyhow. Now what say, youngster, shell we go or not? Likely we shell have to foller 'em seventy-five or a hundred miles, maybe more, and all upon an onsartingty. Ye should think of that afore ye set out, 'cause if yer a goin' tew back out, now is the best time to do it, afore ye git intew trouble!"

The dark-visaged speaker had regarded his companion very closely as he proceeded, but if he looked for any weakness or signs of indecision, he was mistaken. The youth raised an honest gaze to that of his interlocutor, and calmly replied:

"I thought all over afore I sot out, Barney. I ain't afraid o' travelin'. for you know I am good at it; nor I ain't afraid of red-skins neither. I don't want to be killed by 'em, of course, nor I don't intend they shall do it. I am goin' on: if you are at all doubtful you are at liberty to go when you're a mind to."

"Bosh, Walt.; talk about my backin' eout. Don't know

any such word. I said I'se goin' with ye, and so I be; but I ain't goin' to bind myself to nothin'. If I think it best to cut stick, why I shall do it, and if you think I ain't goin' on in jest the right way, and can't talk me out of it, why, you are to hev the same chance!"

Walter's countenance fell at this broad declaration. If he understood the matter his companion reserved to himself the right of absconding whenever there should be danger, and leaving the youth alone to face it. He did not fully fancy such an arrangement, since it would be very likely to bring unpleasant results; but Walter was not disposed to argue the point, and so the matter was dropped. They pursued the trail till near noon, when they made a short pause for the double purpose of rest and refreshment, and when they set out again they felt stronger and better for it. They traveled until night, and still no signs of Indians' presence.

"We'd better stop here, I take it," said Barney. "It will be hard followin' the trail in the night 'less a feller has owls' eyes. It's putty sartin we can't overhaul the heathins now till they git home, and we may as well take things easy and keerful."

"That is jest my mind," said Walter. "We can't be too careful, and it won't be any advantage to go blunderin' along in the dark."

They sought such rest as was possible under the circumstances. Although this was the second night since Walter had slept at all, he could hardly close his eyes. The strange events of the past twenty-four hours, the sudden transition from the light of happiness to such misery and uncertainty as was now his portion, almost unmanned him when he came to lie and think calmly about them.

But he slept finally, and his sleep was so sound that he was only awakened by the harsh voice of Barney, who was shaking him by the shoulder.

"Come," he said, "you'd better pile out and eat some breakfast. We want to start as soon's it's light enough to see a track in the mud. 'Cordin' to my kalkilashin you'll see the Injin town afore sundown!"

Walter hastened to comply, and by the time they had eaten the coming day lighted up the east. They lost no time in

starting, and followed the trail with vigor till near noon. Then Barney stopped, and threw himself upon the ground with a sigh.

"Whew-w-w!" he sighed. "It's hot, and I'm tired. Let's rest a while, Walt., and talk over things a little."

The young man was not positive as to what Barney might want to talk over, but he felt that a little rest would be very acceptable to himself just at that time. So he dropped his side upon the ground, and stretched his tired limbs out at full length upon the turf.

"Reckin you don't know jestly whar these onedecated Arabs live, up this way, do ye?" Brooks asked, after a short pause.

"I know nothin' about it," returned Walter, "only from the trail we've followed, and what I've hearn people say."

"Thar, ye see, is whar I've got a little advantage," pursued Barney. "I've been up here afore, and know the lay of the land purty well. Ye see, I came up last year as a sort of gin'ril scout, to report what I could find. I run acrost the village they've got up here in the woods, and staid around a day or two. So ye see I may know something that'll be an advantage to ye."

"That's so, Barney; why didn't you tell me of this before?"

"You see, Walt. Marsh, I hadn't got quite ready to talk with ye about it. Of course I know you'll be perfectly willin' to do what's right if a feller takes hold and helps ye in this here job."

"You may be sure of that, Barney."

"So I am. But you wouldn't think I'd done all what I have jest for the fun of the thing; course you'd know better than that."

The youth nodded his head in acknowledgment, but he did not speak. He felt that he understood with too much certainty what the other was driving at.

"You know I'm like all other mortals—course I be. Don't the Bible say 'tain't good for man to be all alone? You know"—his voice sunk to a confidential tone—"you know I used to be round arter Fanny a little. I liked Fanny, but I didn't care nothin' about marryin' on her. 'Tain't so with your sister. Now come, what do you say? S'posin' we git 'em

away a slick and soun !, what would you think of me fer a brother-in-law, hey ?”

“ Or course I should not object to you for a brother, if Ada felt so disposed.”

He regretted the words as they passed from his lips ; but it was too late now to recall them. He *would* object most decidedly to any such arrangement !

“ Of course you wouldn’t ; you’re a sensible fellow, Walt. Now what do you think the gal herself would say to me ?”

The youth was a little perplexed in what manner to reply. He preferred not to offend his friend just now, for he felt how valuable his services might be. On the other hand, he would not give him encouragement which could have no foundation.

“ I guess you don’t think I’ll stan’ much of a chance with her,” said Barney, noticing his hesitation. “ Now tell me honestly, wasn’t that about what you’s thinkin’ ?”

“ I can’t deny but I was thinkin’ suthin’ of that kind.”

“ Course you can’t, for any body could see it with half an eye. But I’ll tell you jest what it all amounts to. You make sure to me that I kin marry your sister when this thing is all over with, and I’ll help you along ! What do you say ?”

“ I have nothing to say in the matter,” returned Walter. “ Ada must choose her husband, and I ken tell you she *will* do it ; my promise wouldn’t have no effect on her.”

“ But I tell you it will ! Just make me that promise, and I will stake my life the girl will fall into it. I run the risk of that ; you jest say I shall hev’ her.”

“ We don’t know she is here ; we may not find her. We’ll wait till we are certain of that.”

“ No we won’t. I say, *perridin’ she is here !* That’s what I mean. ’Tain’t more nor five or six miles to the place, but I don’t go a foot nearer till you make me that thing sure. If you can’t do that, I’ll go back, and you can work it out yourself ; you know that was the understanding !”

Walter did not reply at once. What could he say but to tell the rascal to go his own way ? And yet he disliked to do that now. Barney watched his every expression, meanwhile, with unvarying interest.

“ Come, don’t spile yer mind arter it’s made up !” he said, in

an impatient tone. "I guess I'll be goin'," he said, a moment later, rising as if to leave.

"Stop! hold on!" cried Walter, plucking his sleeve. "Wait a minute, and let me think."

He scarce heeded the words he spoke. He only knew that if Barney should leave him he would be utterly alone, and the thought was not a pleasant one. What object he had, even Walter himself could not have told. What the result might have been, it were difficult to imagine, had not some outward influence interposed, to drive away their thoughts to other channels.

Before either had time to speak, the low report of a musket broke upon the air. It sounded almost directly in advance of them.

"That's an Injin gun," remarked Brooks, listening intently.

"What d'ye s'pose it means?" asked Walter.

"Oh, probably nothing more than some one shootin' game. There goes another one, and there is another. I tell you it's suthin' we ain't posted on!"

Two or three more reports followed, seeming to draw nearer and nearer. The listeners almost held their breaths with suspense.

"Look a-there!" suddenly exclaimed Barney. "See that feller! By the jumpin' Moses, it's a white man, sure as you live! See! and there come the red hounds after him!"

Walter had seen the fugitive, and grasped his rifle with eager hands. It was evident that an adventure awaited them, though of what nature it was difficult to determine. He saw that there were six of the Indians in pursuit, and that they gained rapidly upon the fleeing white. The latter was shaping his course almost directly toward them, and if his present rate of speed be maintained, it seemed evident that he would reach them some yards in advance of his pursuers.

"Of course we'll help the feller—course we will," said Barney, in answer to the questioning look of his more youthful companion. "Pity if we two, with what tools we've got, ain't a match for a half-dozen red-skins. Here's an old log; let's git behind this."

They did so, and by this time the fugitive was within a little distance of them.

"Are ye purty sure of 'em from here?" Barney asked.

"I can pick out any one of the six, and take him on the wing," was the confident reply.

"Then do you take the hindmost. I'll shoot fur the fust one, for you know I ain't quite that sure with the rifle you are. There, now, git a good sight on him, and when I blaze away do you follow suit."

They rested their rifles over the log, and were in the act of taking deliberate aim, when a sudden commotion among the Indians caused a curiosity to see what affected them thus.

To their surprise, they saw that the fugitive had faced about, and, with pistol in hand, stood awaiting their coming.

"He's a spunky one!" said Walter. "Whoever he is, I fancy he would give them a hard brush alone. He goes about it as though he knew his business."

"That he does; and I'll jest give it as the private 'pinion of Barney Brooks that them Injins got hold of a tough customer when they found that feller."

"See, they've fell to loading their guns," returned Walter; "that never'll do, for him or for us."

"No, it won't. Do you take the same man you had before, and I will take mine. We'll jes' let 'em know of our presence."

CHAPTER VI

THE THREE.

THE two fired almost simultaneously. Walter's man dropped in his tracks, while the other yelled wildly from the effects of a ball which had shattered his shoulder. The Indians recoiled in unbounded surprise, and remained motionless, hardly knowing whether to flee or to fight.

They were soon decided by the appearance of two yelling whites, who rushed down upon them with pistols in their hands. They would not, of course, flee from such numbers, and they resolved to fight. But when another and another fell before the fast-repeated shots, they broke from the place,

and went howling through the forest, pursued by a trio of farewell pistol-shots.

As the reader well knows, the fugitive was none other than Maurice Bryant. He had been scarcely less astonished than the Indians at the turn affairs had taken. But his emotions were of a different nature; he felt that deliverance was at hand, and he at once pressed forward to join in the conflict.

The Indians had no sooner fled than he turned to his deliverers, to thank them for the signal service they had rendered him. A mutual recognition between the younger two was the result.

"Am I mistaken in calling you Walter Marsh?" Maurice asked, as he grasped the outstretched hand of the burly youth.

"No sir-e-e, you ain't!" was the hearty rejoinder; "and I kalkilate I'm about right in callin' you Maurice Bryant?"

"You are right, Walter; and I need not tell you I am glad to meet you, in more senses than one. This, too, is a man from Wharbuton," he continued, turning to Barney, "unless I mistake, though I can not call to mind his name."

"Then you don't remember that old rough of a Barney Brooks?" that individual asked.

"Oh, yes! So it is you, Barney? Give me your hand. I am glad to meet both of you, and especially glad of the aid you rendered me. I had just concluded to give up running, and try the virtue of my revolver. But I am safely clear of the Indians now."

"How in the world came you in this part of the country, and in such a fix as this?" demanded Walter, who could hardly have been more surprised by the appearance of the original Adam himself than by that of Maurice Bryant.

The latter briefly related how he had been a passenger on the stage-coach; how it had been assaulted by Indians, and himself carried a prisoner to the Indian town; how he had escaped that morning, partly by strategy and partly by force; and then he related the incidents of his morning flight.

Walter listened attentively, and when Maurice paused he said:

"If you have just come from the Injin village, I think it's likely you can tell us somethin' of what we want to know."

"I will tell you any thing I know," was the answer; "but first tell me of Fanny—is she well?"

Maurice noticed the ghastly look which passed over the face of him whom he addressed, and he cut short his question with a fearful foreboding at his heart.

"That's what we want to find out about," Walter stammered. "The Injins hev got her?"

"Got her—not got Fanny?"

"Yes they hev," interrupted Brooks. "I'll tell ye all about it, 'cause ye see Walt. is a leetle womany on sech things, and he might not tell it jest as fluent as a feller like me."

Thereupon he proceeded, in his own way, to relate the occurrences of the birthday festival, especially making prominent his own part in the affair after the arrival of the savages.

"Any body knows I wouldn't brag over my own doin's," he said; "but I must say, honestly, that I do believe if I hadn't took a stand ag'in 'em, and showed 'em that there was some *men* in the place, they'd a burnt down every house and killed every one of us—that's a fact!"

A sly glance exchanged between the listeners showed that both comprehended the speaker.

"So Walt. and I set out," he concluded by saying, "determined to fetch 'em back, or else leave our ashes out here in the woods. He had a motive, and so had I!"

"The body of the warriors had not returned when I took leave," said Maurice. "But it is probable they have come since, if you have trailed them. Of course your best way will be to push right forward, and if you are willing, I will go back with you. My experience there might be of some service to you, in the end."

"Course—sart'in; we'll start right off—course we will!" exclaimed Barney, uncertain whether to feel displeased or otherwise at the appearance of Maurice.

"And I would suggest," pursued the latter, "that we make a circuit, so as to come around upon the other side of the village. Of course they understand, by this time, that there are enemies in this direction, and we shall be very apt to encounter other parties of them; so that my plan would be to go around by a detour, and come in upon the north side.

This was good reasoning, and they proceeded to act upon the suggestion. After reloading such of their weapons as had been discharged, and providing Maurice with a gun from one of the fallen savages, they set out.

They traveled till near night, and by that time had reached a position of comparative safety upon the north side of the Indian town. They had been so fortunate as not to encounter a single savage, though at the time when they came in sight of the town several were seen coming in, whom they surmised to have been on the look-out for themselves.

It was evident that there had been a large influx of warriors during the day, and this fact gave the scouts strong hopes that the maidens had been brought in with them. They accordingly fell back to a safe distance, where they ate a hearty supper, and matured plans for ascertaining the whereabouts of those they sought.

Finally, it was decided that Maurice alone should undertake the difficult task. The knowledge he had gained during his own captivity had been such as to assist him materially, and he had still some hopes of playing upon their fancies and superstitions in case of capture. As it would be darkest in the early part of the night, he resolved to set off as soon as darkness should fairly clothe the earth.

There might be nearly two hours till that time, and this he improved in sleep. Being awakened at the proper moment, he proceeded to the margin of the stream within view of the town, and took a long survey of it through the gathering gloom of twilight. All appeared quiet, and very few Indians seemed to be stirring. This was very naturally accounted for, since those who had just returned would certainly seek for rest after the bloody carnival in which they had been prominent actors. If that rest was kept up through the night, it would facilitate the young man's plans to a great extent.

He went back to his companions, and reported the state of affairs. They saw by his very manner that he had more hopes now than at any previous time.

"I fancy that it will be perfectly easy for me to ascertain whether the girls are there," he said. "I know all about the hut where they will be most likely to be placed, and it may be that I can get them out without any trouble. If I can do

this I shall, and if not I will come back, and we will consult over the matter. I want to station you two down here just over the creek, so that we shall be convenient to each other."

He led the way, and when they reached the brook he had crossed under different circumstances in the morning, he posted his two companions behind a rock, and, after a few final instructions, placed his rifle beside them, as it would be dangerous for him, and could serve no good purpose in the work before him.

Then he glided away with a cautious movement, and very soon his form was lost to view in the dense darkness. For some time the twain listened, but all was so perfectly silent that it did not seem possible any person could be moving amid the dark stillness.

They had already begun to watch for the return of Maurice, when Walter fancied he heard some movement in the Indian street. He placed his finger warningly upon his companion's arm, and together they listened intently, to detect any sounds which might give them a clue to the cause of the commotion.

"I'm afeard Maurice has got into trouble," whispered Walter, very cautiously.

"I know every thing ain't right," returned Barney, positively. "See, them lights ain't all for nothin'."

As he spoke the light of three or four pine knots was reflected from the water, above and below them, and the watchers could see dusky forms moving about the street in every direction.

"They hain't got him yit!" whispered Walter. "Must be they hev found out he's there. I wonder he does not come back."

Meanwhile, the commotion increased, the lights flew around faster, and soon they appeared upon the opposite bank of the stream. This was getting to be too much of a joke for the twain in watching. At times the Indians passed within a few yards of them, throwing the light of their torches upon any object within range.

Yet there was one consolation. While the search was kept up they could feel sure that Maurice was not captured. The only wonder was that he had not come back to them, as

had been the agreement. There might be many reasons, they well knew, for his having been unable to come, but they would have felt more easy if they had been made acquainted therewith.

But the search was finally given over in that vicinity, the lights withdrawn, and quiet again prevailed. For some time afterward, the waiting ones listened and looked in vain for the appearance of Maurice. He did not come; and the assurance they had felt that he was still safe began to grow weaker.

"I ain't so sart'in," whispered Barney, "'bout his gittin' away! I shouldn't wonder a bit if they'd put him out o' the way. Likely they'd do it peaceful, 'cause he had fooled 'em so once."

"Oh," exclaimed Walter, "I hope not! Maurice is too good and brave to fall by their hands. It may be that he has been taken, perhaps; but it can hardly be that he has been killed. Possibly he has been put into the same prison again. **Let one of us go over and see.**"

"We can't find out," said Barney, discouragingly. "We ain't that well acquainted with the place that he was, and if he didn't stand any sight, why you can see that we'll not. Better wait a while longer, and see if he don't come."

But Walter was too impatient to wait. He insisted upon going, for he could not rest until the doubt in his mind was solved, if that were a possibility. Finding his young companion determined in the matter, Barney finally volunteered his own service.

"I'm a little better acquainted with the lay o' the land than you, Walt," he said, "and if one of us is to go, I suppose it had better be me. I'll go over and do all I kin to find out what's happened the chap, and if I can't dew it we'll hev to **rest in peace till he comes, if he ever does.**"

"Of course you'll do all you can to find out?" said the younger, as his companion deposited his rifle beside Maurice's gun.

"You oan rest easy o' that. Now stay here till I come back, 'less the Injins drive ye off, and don't let 'em hev the **guns then, if ye kin help it.**"

With mutual professions of good faith, they parted, Barney

taking his way across the turbulent run, and Walter waiting patiently the development.

Brooks hardly knew how to proceed after he had placed a veil of darkness between himself and companion. Acting upon his usual selfish plan, he did not mean to endanger himself by any zealous effort in the behalf of Maurice Bryant. Possibly he might look at the prison-hut, rising darkly before him, and if he found no one there, he had good reasons to conclude that the young man had either been killed or made good his escape.

He worked his way along very cautiously, and finally he reached the walls of the hut. There he lay for some time in perfect silence, to make sure that he had given no alarm. Feeling reassured after a short pause, he applied his eye to the lowest crevice in the walls. All was inky blackness, but he fancied there was a slight sound, either of a person breathing or of some stealthy movement within. He lowered his head, and remained for some minutes in a state of suspense, then again raised his ear quietly to the dark crevice.

The sounds had not ceased; on the contrary, they were plainer than before. He was sure, now, that it was the breathing of some person. Couldn't it be that he had made the important discovery that Ada and Fanny were close to him—**separated only by a barrier of logs?**

The very possibility imbued him with an earnestness he had not felt before. Perchance himself alone would become the favored means of their liberation! He dared to make no noise which might indicate his presence till he had satisfied himself in relation to the guards. Indeed, he almost expected each moment to hear the report of a weapon from within, and to feel himself shot.

Again he applied his eye to the aperture, but it was utterly in vain that he sought to penetrate the gloom within. He moved carefully to one side until he reached the end of the hut. He could see nothing, for inky darkness prevailed. There were indications of a storm, which he hoped would come, since it might assist him in his plans.

Believing the necessity of learning more of the position of affairs, he began slowly making his way through between the prison-hut and the one next to it. There was but little room;

Indeed, he was almost forced to squeeze himself along. But he worked his way noiselessly, keeping a sharp look-out for any movement before him. Probably he did not pay sufficient attention to danger in other directions; at the least, he soon found himself in a tight place, in more senses than one.

The first premonition of danger was the sharp barking of a dog, a few paces before him. Nor was the animal alone. Through the gloom Barney could distinguish several moving forms. Gradually retreating and grasping his revolver, he was not aware of any danger in the rear till he felt himself seized firmly by the shoulders, and thrown upon his back! The move was so utterly unexpected, that he hardly realized the fact till he was past all resistance. Still, he went through a certain form, struggling with all his might, which was far beyond the average of strong men.

Before he had really comprehended the danger, his hands were bound behind him in a manner quite painful. His pockets and belt were instantly rifled of all they held, and he was marched away.

For a time he almost fancied that he should gain by his captivity, since he would be enabled to learn who really occupied the prison-hut. But he was doomed to disappointment in that respect, for he was taken away to another hut, where a light was burning, and where a swarthy Indian at once mounted guard over him with his rifle at full cock.

Barney cowered into a corner and sat down, fearing that every motion of the Indian would explode his weapon. As it was pointed toward him most of the time, it was no pleasant contemplation.

CHAPTER VII.

EVENTS OF A NIGHT.

LET us return to Maurice Bryant.

After leaving his fellows in readiness to coöperate with him, he stole across the brook, and was soon ensconced in the very place which afterward proved fatal to the safety of Barney Brooks. His proceedings were very much like to those of the last-named individual, save that he was actuated by the best and noblest of motives.

The first effort he made was to ascertain, so far as possible, if the prison from which he had escaped had been put in use again. He could not tell from where he stood; but he was pretty sure, when he viewed the place that afternoon, that the roof had been repaired. If this were a fact, it argued pretty strongly that inmates were there, for he knew that the Indian was not sufficiently zealous in the matter to have repaired it without some strong reason for so doing.

Maurice applied his ear to one of the chinks, and after a pause he felt certain that he heard the movement of parties within. Whether it might be whites or Indians, he had no means of determining, but he continued to listen, hoping something would transpire to enlighten him.

All remained still save the same movement now and then repeated. He became impatient. How should he ascertain what vexed him so much? He had discretion enough not to whisper, and what other means to take he knew not. Probably an old scout, used to the business of fighting and outwitting Indians, would have been at no great loss for some expedient to solve the mystery. But it was new business to Maurice, and he hesitated to apply those tests which presented themselves to his mind.

He felt the danger of delay, and realized how expectant his friends across the creek would be should he delay for any great length of time. In placing his hand upon the ground he encountered a small pebble, not larger than the end of his

thumb. Here was a suggestion. Perhaps he could ascertain something by means of this. He raised it in his hand, and pitched it upon the roof. There was a gentle clatter upon the bark, and sounds of an uneasy movement within. That was all.

He raised another, with the same result. How provoking the silence of those within! Why did they not speak, or give some exclamation to assure him of their identity?

He had selected a third pebble, which he intended to send inside, when he was conscious of some movement not far distant. He looked quickly upon either side, but could see no moving form. He was a little in doubt whether his ears, rendered unusually acute by the excitement under which he labored, had not deceived him, when he was suddenly convinced that he was perfectly correct.

A ray of light was flashed through the chinks of the cabin behind him, and a guttural grunt announced that he was discovered! This would have been unpleasant enough at any time, but just now, when he fancied himself upon the eve of an important discovery, it was more than unpleasant.

But the youth had no time to philosophize. He must first seek his own safety. Creeping along toward the street, choosing the bolder way as less likely to be suspected, he passed into the open space, and turned quickly down, past the prison. He noticed that the door was barred, and that was all, for he heard the alarm sounding in a low tone from hut to hut.

He paused almost before the cabin occupied by Eagle Nose, and stepped behind a corner of it to consider. The occupant seemed to have been awake, and just then he opened the door and stepped out, taking his way rapidly toward the scene of tumult, to discover the cause.

Maurice felt determined not to leave the village until he had accomplished his errand, unless the search became too strict. He fancied that by putting more distance between himself and the place where he had been discovered, he should be the better able to rejoin his companions, inform them of the fact, and then take such opportunity to prosecute his purpose as should present.

He had started onward with that intention uppermost,

when a savage appeared from the door of a cabin almost opposite, bearing a lighted pine knot in his hand. Scarcely realizing what he was going to do, Maurice stepped within the open door of the chief's residence. He had done this to shield himself from the rays of the torch; but a second consideration presented itself soon. There was a dim fire which shed its feeble light over the apartment, and revealed a large stock of plunder which had been placed here for safe-keeping—probably for distribution.

As Maurice stood looking over the pile, which filled at least a third of the hut, a heavy step sounded at the door. In a moment more Eagle Nose entered the apartment. He did not seem as keen of vision as the bird from which he had been named, inasmuch as he did not notice the presence of the white, who had drawn back beside the plunder, knife in hand.

Here was Maurice in something of a dilemma. The chief turned and remained standing in the door, waiting for the signal of capture from his subjects. That was the only door, and the young man would much rather have been elsewhere than in the abode of power. But he would not think of leaving now, as he could see by the light of torches that all the Indians were abroad.

He thought of his two companions, and the danger they were in; but, knowing he could not assist them, he wisely began to look about for some place less exposed than that where he now stood. A few cautious glances revealed the very place he sought. Underneath the pile, or rather between two distinct piles, there was an aperture into which he felt sure he could easily crawl. This he at once proceeded to do, sliding in feet foremost, very cautiously; and so occupied was Eagle Nose in watching the search without, that he had no suspicion how important was the game that was burrowing in his pile of plunder.

Maurice bestowed himself so that he could watch the movements of his host, and yet withdraw his head at the first sign of discovery. He lifted gently upon the pile, and felt confident that by a quick upward movement he could overthrow it, and stand erect, ready for any desperate measure.

The chief stood in the door for some time, and then he entered the cabin, followed by half a dozen braves. Maurice kept a jealous eye upon their motions. The door was shut, and the braves sat down to council! Matters began to look a little serious. When and how was the white to escape from his unpleasant predicament?

For a very long time the conference continued. It seemed to Maurice that it would never break up. All was still without, and he longed to be about the old prison again. It held a secret he felt bound to solve. But his prospects could scarce be called encouraging. The seven Indians finally separated, and made toward the door. But no—they are invited to remain! Such a request can not be evaded. The Indians advanced to the pile of plunder, and selected such articles as they wished, then threw themselves upon the floor, and rolled the blankets and quilts about them!

Maurice felt that his situation was growing critical. He could not remain where he was until morning, and how to leave the place?—that was the question. A dozen plans ran through his brain, but were rejected upon careful consideration.

Perhaps half an hour had passed, and most of the Indians were sleeping. There was still a little fire in the opening which could scarcely be called a chimney, and the youth began to turn his attention toward that. One of two plans alone seemed likely to work. If he could not get out through the chimney, he might burn his way out! It would be very hazardous, but quite preferable to remaining there all night.

While busy with these reflections, he heard a tumult without. His heart told him the reason. One or both of his comrades had gotten into trouble! The Indians heard the same sounds, and several of them arose and went out. To the infinite annoyance of the man beneath the bundles, two of them persisted in sticking to their blankets.

But when one of their number returned, and muttered a joyful sentence in gutturals, they sprung up and hastened into the open air. This was an opportunity Maurice must not lose. He drew himself forth, glided along the wall, and looked out. One or two Indians were just passing, and as they hastened into the shadow, Maurice glided from the cabin, where he had been so long an unsuspected guest.

His satisfaction at this result was qualified by the knowledge that one or both of his companions had fallen into the power of the savages. Instead of seeking his own safety at once, he preferred to see what he could discover in that regard. Keeping in the shadow, which did not require much effort, he followed in the direction he had seen others take, and soon beheld the cause of all the tumult.

Barney Brooks was in the midst of the motley crowd, bound and disarmed! The light of the pine-knots revealed these facts, and Maurice waited until he saw him disposed of. The Indians then scattered to their homes, and the white drew back till quiet should be restored again.

He had not very long to wait, for most of the Indians, as he had conjectured, were well worn, and anxious for rest. Within ten minutes after Barney's imprisonment, Maurice was crouched beneath the walls of the hut. The flaming torch, which had been put there as an additional security, gave him a full view of all within the apartment. He satisfied himself that but a single red-man was within. He seemed unusually ferocious, and there was no need of a prophet to predict that his ferocity would soon ooze out. Till such time it would be better to delay all operations. Quite possible it was that the guard might become drowsy within an hour or so. Meanwhile, Maurice was very anxious to see Walter, and communicate with him upon the matter of further action.

Taking a wide circuit, so as to avoid all farther encounters with the red citizens, the young man made his way as rapidly as consistent with the utmost caution toward the trysting rock, where he hoped, yet hardly expected, to meet the honest young Marsh. But, upon nearing the place, he was conscious of a movement, and knew that either friend or foe must be there.

"Walter!" he muttered, in a low tone, keeping sheltered from a treacherous shot.

"It is Maurice!" joyfully but not boisterously exclaimed the watcher. "Or is it you, Barney?" he added, as a doubt seemed to cross his mind.

"It is Maurice," was the careful reply.

The two met and grasped each other warmly by the hand.

"I am so glad ye've come," said Walter, "for I began to get blue. Seemed as though we'd all been doomed!"

"Barney has had a little bad luck," said the other, hopefully ;
"but I think our prospect is good yet."

"He is a prisoner?"

"Yes, at present. But I know how he is situated, and if I am not mistaken, can get him away from them without any trouble."

"That is good. What did you find out besides that?"

"Nothing positive," replied Maurice; and then he related the events of his sojourn in the Indian village.

Walter listened with an interest as intense as though he was really taking in the scenes. When the recital was ended he clapped his hand heartily upon his companion's shoulder.

"Good for you, my down-east friend!" he exclaimed; "you ought to fight Injins! You are a sight smarter than that Luther-stockin' you read to me about once, years ago; and they thought he was so smart they had to print his doin's!"

"There is every prospect that we shall have all the fighting we wish for before our mission is accomplished," said Maurice. "I hardly think, from the experience we have had thus far, that either of us would prefer making a life-business of it."

"I'm certain I should not. I am half froze now, Maurice. What are we goin' to do next? I want some shake in, so's to thaw me out a little."

"Our first move will be to get Barney away from them. That I can best do alone. When that is done we must attend to the other matter without any delay, for a great deal of the night has been wasted already."

"It seems likely for a storm, too," remarked Walter, glancing at the black canopy overhead. "How the wind whistles—and I felt a drop of rain then. We shall have it right away!"

"Let it come. Nothing could be better for us than a moderate storm. Its noise will drown any movements we make, and the Indians will hardly care to turn out on mere suspicion."

"Only it will be so disagreeable for the girls," suggested Walter.

"We will not make any calculations over them till we are a little more sure that they are here. But in any case, I think they will prefer storm with us to shelter with the Indians."

The evidences of a storm became stronger each moment. The wind swept along wildly, and big drops of rain began to patter through the trees and upon the ground. The strife of the elements was the very thing Maurice wished to see. Besides the natural advantages it gave him, it roused the spirit in his bosom to a corresponding pitch of fury. That which he would have looked upon as rash and desperate an hour before, he began to have serious intentions of performing now.

First of all he must release Barney. He felt that they must all operate together, and then he knew their project would be a daring one. But the very thought that the dear sister whom he had journeyed so far to see, and who had been so constantly in his mind during the three years which had passed since he saw her last—the bare idea that she was a prisoner in the midst of Indians, and exposed to the caprices of their wild natures, was sufficient to fire every energy of his manhood. True, he was not certain that she was near him; but the more he doubted it the more positive became his faith that she was confined in the very hut which had contained him.

He gave a few parting directions to Walter, and then set off to attempt the liberation of Barney. He took a circuitous direction, for he felt that every thing depended upon the utmost care. A single disaster might mar all their plans—it would be pretty sure to end their operations for the night, at least—and the idea of another day's suspense was unbearable.

Carefully approaching the hut where the prisoner was—and here Maurice owed the Indians for guidance, since the torch-light shining through the chinks guided him directly to the place—he crept up cautiously, and applied his eye to the chinks.

As he suspected, the relative positions had changed considerably during his absence. The guard was sleepy and stupid, and sat upon a block of wood, nodding dreamily. Barney had scarcely moved, and from his present position Maurice could not tell whether he was asleep or not.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOMETHING OR NOTHING.

KNOWING that the night was passing rapidly, and determined not to delay one moment longer than should be really necessary, Maurice moved down to the corner next to Barney, and applied his mouth to a crevice just behind the captive's ear.

"Barney," he whispered, cautiously.

There was no response. Evidently he was asleep, or so near it as to be regardless of what was passing.

A little search revealed to Maurice a long splinter, which he pushed through the opening, and gave Brooks a sharp punch in the shoulder.

Barney sprung to his feet with a jump, though he realized in a moment the cause. The Indian also started up, rubbed his eyes, and brought his gun to bear upon the captive.

"Keep still," whispered a voice just without, which the white heard, but the savage did not.

"Blast it all, what dreams a feller has if he tries to sleep any!" growled Barney, sinking back, and laying the side of his head up to one of the broadest openings.

"Wait till he gets quiet," whispered the voice; "then put up your arms so that I can cut them loose. Of course you can dispose of *him* without any noise then?"

They did not have very long to wait, for the Indian was sleepy, and soon nodded upon his block again. Barney at once raised his hands to the crevice, and in a moment he felt his bonds loosen. Then something was placed in his hand, and upon closing it he grasped the handle of a heavy knife.

"Be careful," was whispered. "I will come around and let you out."

Barney waited a moment, until he saw the sentinel's head begin to bend; then he sprung upon him with the fury of a tiger. Clutching his throat with his left hand, he plunged the

knife into his bosom, and the brave lay dead in a pool of his own blood.

At the same moment he heard the bar removed from the door with a jar, and the door itself was thrown open with a bang.

"He ain't very keerful hisself," thought Barney, as he saw a form darken the opening.

It gave him a slight start when he looked up and beheld a tall Indian stalking in, instead of the white man he had expected to behold!

As Maurice moved cautiously around to unbar the door, he was a little startled at finding three Indians standing near it. The light which shone through the chinks enabled him to discern them before he had betrayed himself. He paused for a moment, to note the prospect, before deciding upon any course of action. This enabled him to see that they were conversing earnestly upon some subject, and seemed very much excited.

Before he could form any plan of action, they separated, two of them passing by where he stood, while the third unbarred the door and entered the cabin. Upon what a slender chance hung defeat or success! With quick bounds Maurice sprung upon the intruder, clubbing his pistol, which was the only weapon he now possessed.

Fortunately he entered close behind the Indian, before he had time to make any comments or raise an outcry. While he stood gazing in wonder and alarm at the spectacle before him, a crushing blow from Maurice's heavy pistol knocked him senseless upon the floor.

"Make sure of 'em while ye can—that's my rule!" exclaimed Barney, rushing toward the prostrate form with knife raised.

"No, no; he is safe enough," said Maurice. "Let him lie there, while we attend to making our escape."

But, the demon in Barney was aroused, and before his more humane companion could prevent the action, he plunged his knife repeatedly into the Indian's breast.

Then he stepped out after his liberator, the door was barred as it had been, and they took their way rapidly around toward the rock where Walter awaited them.

"I am sorry you killed that last Indian," said Maurice, after they had gained a sufficient distance to converse. "He was safe enough as he was, and it seemed cruel to take his life."

"Oh, bosh on yer preachin'!" exclaimed Barney, quite impatiently. "It sounds well enough, and I don't know but it works well, back whar you come from; but I kin tell you one thing—it won't work here. If I kin kill a red skin with safety, I'll do it, and it'll not be any the wuss for me, neither."

They reached the rock in a short time. Walter was faithful to his post, busily engaged in keeping the guns dry, and watching for his companions and danger.

"So soon!" he said, with pleasant surprise. "I didn't look for ye for an hour yit!"

"We are here," said Maurice, "and all ready for action. We must make haste, for morning can not be a great way off. Wait here a minute, and I'll make known my plan, said he, springing away.

He returned in a short time with a strip of resinous pine, which he proceed'd to split with a knife into long, thin rods.

"My plan is this," he said; "I know it's a trifle risky, but we must take more or less risk. In the first place, we must see the insile of that hut yonder. When we've done that we can plan further. Now, let one of us light a strip of this pine, and put it through the cracks upon the rear side. The others lie ready to see every thing as soon as the light strikes it. Then we will strike for this place and compare notes. Can not that be done?"

Both of them declared that it was the very thing. Walter at once offered to furnish the light, while his companions should scrutinize the interior. Although admitting that there was danger in the plan, none less dangerous or more certain could be devised.

With the silence of specters they glided to their appointed places. The storm was now sufficiently furious to drown all noise of chance footfalls, and yet the rain did not come in such volumes as to preclude the igniting of the splinters. This was the most difficult task of all, requiring a nicety of

operation, and the utmost care to prevent the manipulator from being revealed by his own light.

His very first effort was successful. He brought the splinter to a light blaze, and thrust it carefully between the logs, far enough for its rays to light up the interior of the hut. Being satisfied that his portion of the task was performed, and well, he turned and glided quickly back to the trysting-place.

In a few moments he was joined by the others, who came in highly elated at the success of their plan.

"What did you discover?" he asked, in a painful whisper.

"They are there!" was the joyful return. "Ada and Fanny, with two Indian guards."

"Oh, heaven be praised! And do you suppose we can get them away?"

"I think so. Now for my plan. We must scheme some, and use some force, no doubt. But, let one of us go up to the further end of the village, and make some commotion there. If he could set a cabin on fire, it would be one of the very best things possible. Then hurry back to us, and while the Indians were busy with the burning cabin, we would undertake to get out the prisoners. I think the plan might be made to work."

"That is a blamed good plan," said Barney. "I want to be the one to go up to set 'em a-smokin'. By the Snappin' Dragons! but won't I do it in fine style?"

By this time it was evident that the Indians were making another search. They passed around the hut containing their prisoners, and came to the creek, but by some fatality failed to cross it, as before. They were certainly puzzled beyond measure by the strange proceedings, though the exact light in which they viewed them could not be known to the adventurers.

Of course while they were busy in this portion of the village would be an excellent time to create a diversion above. Barney took the materials for igniting, and set off, glorying over the desolation he would spread. In case neither of them made any protracted stay, a place of rendezvous was appointed near by, and the entrance to the gulch where Maurice had

shot the two Indians would be their place of meeting, should they fail to come together at the first-mentioned locality.

Maurice and Walter now drew back to await the operations of their ally. As his enterprise would require some time for development, they conversed in low tones for a few moments.

"Gracious, how the wind comes!" Walter remarked, as a gust more powerful than any they had yet experienced swept over the wood and soughed away upon the opposite side of the village. "I'm almost afraid it will bother Barney to light his fire."

"No danger of that," said Maurice, who recollected the vengeful malice with which Barney had murdered the Indian. "He feels too sore over his imprisonment to stop short of death. I fancy it must be almost time for him to be making a stir."

But the moments rolled away; half an hour passed, and still no signs of Barney. The watchers began to grow uneasy. Possibly some danger had befallen him which had not been calculated upon.

"Haden't one of us better go and see what the matter is?" Walter finally suggested.

He had been inactive so long, that he really began to feel concern lest their plan should fail, after all.

"It would be useless," said Maurice. "I do not think he has been discovered, or we should have heard some commotion. As for finding him, it would be about like looking for a needle in the same place. No, we must wait for him, and if nothing transpires for a little time to come, I will go up and see what it means, if it be possible to ascertain."

"Must be daylight soon," continued Walter; "'tis time he is here, or time he was doin' somethin'. We shall be caught in the act, and hev to lay over till another night. By that time it will be too late!"

"Sh!" cautioned the other. "I thought I heard something. There—don't you hear it now?"

Walter bent his head, but he had no need of close listening. He could hear the movements of several men, and gathered at once that they were crossing the creek, and scrambling up the ascent just before them.

The truth of the matter, which they did not know, was that a curious Indian, more inquisitive than his fellows, had penetrated sufficiently near to hear the whispered conversation of the scouts. Fearing to risk his single arm in an encounter, he hastened back, and after alarming several of his brethren, led them toward the white men with more precipitation than prudence.

Maurice was first to really comprehend the peril of their situation, and without a word he grasped his companion by the arm, and they moved away as rapidly as consistent with perfect silence.

Scarcely were they a rod away when the Indians rushed upon the place where they had been sitting. The fugitive heard the movement, and then a profound silence, as the Indians realised that their prey had fled. Following this came a quick buzz of wonder and inquiry, which they did not stop to hear.

Then the savages separated, and began a rapid search in the vicinity, extending their movements right and left, but scarcely penetrating the forest at all. Of course such a plan would never find those who had the advantage of an impenetrably dark back-ground.

Evidently the savages had begun to give over the search, when a fresh commotion, which the whites heard with joy, arose from the upper portion of the village. Believing that those of whom they were in quest had fled to that place, and were engaged with their fellows there, the Indians scattered in that direction without delay.

The whites, crouching and chilled by the storm, hailed their relief with quiet expressions of satisfaction!

A dusky light, barely sufficient to reveal a heavy column of thick smoke, showed that Barney had not failed in his task. The tramp of Indian feet from every direction could be heard, all hastening to the source of tumult.

The time for the last important attempt had come

CHAPTER IX.

THE RESCUE.

WE left the maidens, Ada and Fanny, at the moment when Walter Marsh encountered the Indians in the back entry, on the night of Wharbuton's sorrow.

With apprehensions of immediate massacre, they fled into the room from which they had just come, and where two savages were busy with the work of pillage. The scene at the moment of their entrance would have been worthy an artist, and must have provoked a smile from the maidens themselves, had they not realized too fully their danger to think of any thing else. One of them had found the violin which Walter had discarded, and the other held Jeff Flagg's violincello. The relative sizes of the "fiddles" made all the difference in the world as to their treatment. While the former was enfolded in the Indian's brawny arms with the utmost care and solicitude, the other red-skin was hacking away with his hatchet at the scrolled and painted head of the larger instrument.

They relinquished the strange wooden images when the maidens entered the apartment, and both sprung toward them. The girls attempted flight, but they were confused, and before a move had been made a savage grasped each by the shoulder.

"This squaw mine!" exclaimed the one who had hold of Ada.

"What for?" demanded his companion.

"Take her home to live in my wigwam. Make her Injin squaw!"

The other looked at Fanny for a moment, fingering his hatchet meanwhile; then a sudden resolve seemed to possess him.

"So me, too!" he exclaimed, with energy. "Me no take scalp—me take squaw!"

And he laughed with a low chuckle at his witticism.

The maidens could only tremble with a terrible dread, and watch the movements of their captors. They hoped to hear Walter coming, and yet how improbable the prospect of his vanquishing those whom he had met!

They were not allowed to await his coming, however, for they were instantly hurried from the room, out into the street, where death's carnival reigned midst flame and smoke, down to the end of the settlement, where several horses had been collected.

Selecting two of them, their captors placed the half insensible forms upon them, leaped up themselves, and rode rapidly away in the direction of the oak opening whence the gang had marched upon the mission of destruction.

Here they paused in an obscure part of the grove, and waited the arrival of their party. One by one they came, and finally in larger groups, laden with plunder, leading horses and driving a few cattle. When the party had collected, the word was given and they set off, a little before daylight broke over the scene.

It was a long, hard ride for the maidens, but they bore up under it as bravely as possible. Yet when night came, and they had not reached their destination—when in the morning it was renewed and continued for hours, they began to feel that hope had fled. Worse than death stared them in the face. A lingering captivity, with those lawless, reckless savages. But there was no help now—they must submit, and trust to the higher power which alone could bring them deliverance.

It was noon, or about that, when they reached the filthy Indian town. They were taken in charge by those who had brought them hither, and placed in the prison-cabin. Here they were informed in broken English, they would be kept till their spouses should build a cabin, and then they would be taken to preside over it! Comforting assurance!

And night came on, finding them broken-hearted and desponding. They made a bed of such materials as they were allowed, and lay down, clasped in each other's arms. Of course they heard the tumults with which the night was rife, but knew not that they were an unusual feature in Indian existence.

They were startled when the blazing faggot was thrust in close beside them, and sprung to their feet, fearing some attempt at conflagration. But they heard no more, and had begun to think that it might be the pastime of some Indian lad, when the apparent concern of their guardians gave another train of thought to their minds.

"Fanny, do you suppose it possible we can have friends about this forsaken place—white men, I mean?" Ada asked, after a time.

"I don't know," Fanny returned, somewhat surprised at the question. "What has occurred to cause you to think so?"

"I guess it's all a foolish fancy," was the answer; "but I imagined it might have been a white man that pushed that light through the logs. Of course it couldn't have been; but who else would do any such thing?"

"I'm sure I don't know. But it couldn't be a white man; just hear how the wind blows—and it rains, too! They would hardly be out such a stormy night, even if they were near."

Perhaps she thought so—perhaps she did not. The fact was, both of them reflected that they had entertained rather an unreasonable idea, and were thinking by all possible arguments to dispel the thoughts to which their hopes *would* cling, despite them.

The storm continued, with increasing fury, and the anxious girls listened to every passing footstep. There were many of them, for, as we said, it had been a night of commotion in the Indian town. But their friends, if they were in the vicinity, as their hopes told them, had not come yet.

Let us return to them.

"Come," said Maurice; "the critical moment has arrived. We must trust to our own daring to carry us through. We will open the door, and it is very probable one of the guards will make his appearance. If he does, knock him down with the breech of your gun, and mind that the blow is heavy enough to leave him there. Then we must be guided by chance!"

They hastened down the declivity, and were soon across the creek. Here they proceeded with more caution, and it

was some time before they were ready for action. They found the door unbarred upon the outside, and they thought it possible that it might be secured within. But when Maurice placed his hand upon it, he found that it yielded to his pressure.

"Now!" he whispered, and with a dismal creak the heavy door was thrown open.

One of the Indians grunted something in an angry tone; but, receiving no answer, he arose and stuck his head out at the opening.

This was the very thing they had calculated upon, and, in accordance with his instructions, Walter's gun fell with crushing weight upon the exposed cranium. His companion had not been far behind, but the first intimation of danger which he received was the sound of the blow which knocked down the foremost.

With true Indian instinct, he gave a yell, and discharged his gun; but the ball passed harmlessly, and the next moment another went hurtling through his own brain. It had not been their intention to use fire-arms, but the savage had taken the initiative, and they had no choice but to leave the place as soon as might be.

"Fanny—Ada—where are you?"

"Here we are," was the reply, in tones so tremulous as scarcely to be distinguishable.

"Then hasten, if you would be saved!"

They needed no incentive, beyond the mere assurance that friends were with them, and in a moment one of the deliverers held a hand of each, and the party was rapidly making its way toward freedom.

Soon after quitting the hut, they encountered a single Indian, who had been attracted by the firing. He could not see with any degree of distinctness what it was that he would encounter, and it is very doubtful if he ever knew, for Maurice's rifle descended upon his head with crushing power. He, too, fell senseless, and they pursued their way, making for the first place of rendezvous.

On reaching it, they found that Barney was not there; but they could not wait for him, and taking his gun, which had been secured against dampness, they set out toward the ravine.

They could hear savages hastening, or fancied they could hear them, toward the last scene of disturbance; but in the profound darkness which prevailed, they knew it would take some little time for them to learn the true state of affairs. Every moment which they might gain now would be an advantage, and their greatest hope lay in putting a good distance between them and the Indian village before morning light dawned, when the Indians would have all the advantage if they should undertake the pursuit, which was hardly to be doubted.

Their progress was necessarily slow, and quite providential was it for them that the storm covered the noise they were constantly creating. But, excited and fearful as they were, both the tardiness of their pace and the tumult consequent upon their stumbling and slipping continually, seemed increased ten-fold.

Maurice led the way, and directed their course toward the dark ravine. Having passed over the ground under such circumstances in the morning, every foot of the surface seemed impressed upon his memory, and he felt sure they were taking the right direction, though he could not discern even an outline of the forest.

At length he found that they were on the side of a steep declivity, and he cautioned his companions to remain where they were for a moment, until he had made an exploration. Then he moved carefully down the abrupt bank, and was gone some moments.

"Come," he said, on returning, "we must let ourselves down this grade with care, for it is quite steep. We struck a trifle too high—the ravine is some rods away. Follow me."

They moved with care, and in a short time had the satisfaction of finding the bottom of the gully. They could now move onward without much difficulty, and as the course before them was direct, they would avoid the danger of wandering at random.

"Shall we proceed at once, or shall we wait for Barney?" asked Walter.

"No, we'll not wait," said Maurice. "If he finds the ravine he will have no impediment, and can follow us as fast as

may be. If he should go wide it would be time lost to us, and of no advantage to him."

For some time they toiled up the ravine, gratified that no sounds of pursuit were heard, but alarmed that Barney did not come. The thought that he had periled his life, and perchance lost it, for their sakes, was especially distressing to the maidens.

"I do hope no harm has befallen Barney," said Fanny, with that feeling of indulgence for the faults of another which all truly charitable persons entertain. "He is so kind and brave. If he is wild and reckless, there are enough men who are worse."

"Yes, that is true, Fanny," Ada replied. "And if he were ever so bad, I should not wish harm to come to him, after the part he has taken in securing our deliverance from the Indians."

But no Barney appeared. They listened as closely as possible with their own progression, but no sounds, either of pursuing red-men or their absent comrade, were wafted to their ears.

At length Maurice noticed that the tree-tops were becoming more distinct, and he knew that day was at hand. He called the attention of his companions to the fact.

"We have no time to lose," he said. "We must hasten along with all speed. But I do not feel right to leave without knowing what has befallen Barney. If you, Walter, will see to the women, I will wait, or go back, as occasion may seem to require, and endeavor to ascertain what has become of him."

"No, no, dear brother!" interposed Fanny. "You must not go back again into such perils! Oh! I can not lose you now—indeed I can not!"

"But it would not be generous in me to desert a friend in the hour of danger," replied Maurice, firmly. "He has put his life in peril for our safety, and we ought at least to reciprocate the action."

"Let me go back," said Walter. "Maybe I kin help him if there should be any trouble."

But the venture was not to be required. The light had increased rapidly, and objects at considerable distance were

plainly discerned. Maurice was looking anxiously around for any traces of Barney or of Indians, when he saw a form suddenly move at a considerable distance above them. He was uncertain as to its identity, and, with rifle raised, awaited a demonstration.

In a short time the form of Barney appeared in plain sight. He cast a quick glance around, and then commenced descending rapidly.

"All right?" he asked.

"All right here. How is it with you?"

"Jest the same, though it's a darned hard time I've had a findin' ye. But ye did the thing up grand, I'll be burnt alive if ye didn't."

"We were very fortunate," said Maurice.

"Ye war more than fortunate; ye did the thing up handsome. How d'ye do, Ada and Fanny?" he said, with his politest bow.

They returned the greeting, and proffered their hands, which he shook with respectful fervor.

"I'm darned glad to see ye so fur safe," he said. "But I won't be out of the way in tellin' ye that it's best to hurry, for the red-skins won't be lookin' for ye long, now it's light, afore they find ye."

The party had lost no time during the brief conversation recorded, but had been picking their way over the rough stones and along the slippery path.

"I'll give ye my advice on another thing," said Barney, as he glanced around. "That is that ye'd better get out o' this heathin place now, for it's becomin' clayey, and every step ye make will be as plain to the Injins as a printed book. Out on the leaves they can't track ye so well."

As this advice was sound, they climbed from the ravine, which ran nearly in a southern direction, and bore away more to the westward. While this was not so direct a route to Wharbuton, it was deemed safer, for various reason. They found the travel much easier, and actuated by the hope of safety, the party was enabled to get over the ground at a good rate. They began to flatter themselves that they should give the Indians a strong pull, even if finally overtaken. In that case, they felt how desperately they would fight before again

surrendering to their ferocious enemies. Indeed, it would be a matter of life or death in any case, since they felt sure that their enemies must be so doubly aggravated by this time that they would not spare the lives of the whites for a single moment, should they, by any mischance, fall into their hands, after the trouble they had already given them.

CHAPTER X.

STRATEGY.

"I s'pose you'd like to know how I made out up there," said Barney, after they had reached more toierable walking, nodding in the direction of the Indian town, "and how it come to take me so long?"

They assured him that the recital would be agreeable, and he continued :

"You jest keep a look-out for the red-skins, and I'll tell ye about the operation. Ye see I went off on a purty good circle, 'cause I knew that would take me thar the quickest in the end. I come down along, an' crep' in behind one of the huts. There was no chance thar for me, 'cause I couldn't think o' settin' big wet logs, which were gittin' wetter an' wetter all the time, afire, with the tools I had on hand. So I seen all that war to be seen thar, and then I come down to the next one. Thar I found a confounded dog, and he kinder snuffed as if all wa'n't right to his eye. I s'pected he'd raise the mischief with my plans; but he didn't. He kinder looked me over, an' I him, till I says to myself, 'come, Barney; it's no place around here fur sech as you, with that cur's eye on ye!'

"I tuck off, and the dorg hed wisdom enough to stay whar he was. I went along by two more of the pesky holes, and I'll tell ye, boys, I began to think I shouldn't raise a light. Ise a leetle afeard about tryin' it out'n doors, 'cause every thin was so wet. But jist then I cum to a shanty half-full of plunder what the Injins had robbed our folks of, and here I

began to wonder if I couldn't make a raise. 'Twas jist the place, but how to dew it—that was a poser!

"When I'd looked round a bit, I seen that thar war not less'n five or six red-skins bunkin' round, and I wanted to smoke 'em out wuss nor ever. By-'n-by I looked along, and found a place where I could tuck in a splinter to good advantage. If I only hed it lit! That was all the trouble. It was back so't none of the Injins inside could see it, nor they couldn't see what I was about, neither. I pulled out a match, tucked it through, so't the rain wouldn't hit it, and tried to light her. Off she went, arter a while, with sech a racket that I reckoned the Injins would hear it; but they kept still, and I dropped it down right through the chink.

"But that went out, and tew more sarved me the same trick. But the third one—or fourth one, ruther—I lighted, and give it a heave, so't it landed clear intew the pile, whar it couldn't help burnin'. Christopher! how she flamed! I began to think I was bound to see the whole thing out, fer the light blazed up through the cracks so ye could a seen to **pick up a pin, easy as not!**

"That was suthin' I hadn't kalkilated on, and was deuced afraid they'd spy me afore I could git out o' the way. But I hed one consolation—'twas a candle that they couldn't blow out first puff, and I didn't keer so much fur Barney, if the red-faced cusses took a good smokin'. I crawled along on the ground till I got intew a shadder, and there I kinder waited till I seen what was done. One of the Injins that was kinder bunkin' round, came runnin' up and pecked intew the cracks tew see what made it so light. Thinkin' I might jist as well die for a hog as a pig, I jist slipt up and poked the pint o' my knife through the cracks in his ribs! That didn't seem tew 'gree with him, for he fell down as if he had a fit! Now, thinks I, I'd better be leavin'. But, gracious! when I came tew look 'round, I found myself right in the light, and Injins comin' down by the handfuk to see what was the matter!

"I began to think I'd got myself intew rather a tight place, mebbey; but I started off whar it looked darkest, at a venture. I found by some kind of luck that I was goin' tew meet a handfuk of 'em from that way, though whar they could be a-comin' from I hadn't r'ally any idee. I started off

another way so as to avoid 'em, seein' I didn't keer particularly for their acquaintance. But no; they seemed dreadfully anxious to find out who and what I was, and took arter me. I could 'ave come back this way, and they wouldn't have stood a chance with me, but to run t'other way went right across the grain. One of 'em got in the way, and seemed to hev an idee of stoppin' me; but I gin him a cut acrost the face with my knife, and he stood thar a-howlin' last accounts I had from him.

"If it hadn't been so dark I should have lost in the long run, for they got purty mad, and I hearn one or two arrers go whistlin' round not a long ways off. By the time I got well away from 'em I went to look around, but I seen I'd got to cut stick livelier 'n that, for it was growin' light awful fast. The flames had bu'sted through the ruff, and was makin' good headway, I tell ye. Much good may that batch of dry goods do the pesky red robbers!

"Jist then I hearn guns down by the prison, and I know'd you was up to snuff. Course I couldn't tell how ye made out—course I couldn't—but I was a leetle afeard ye hadn't got off so slick as might be. So, thinks I, I'll work around, and find what I can. While I was thinkin' the matter over, and tryin' to make out how I should git thar best, I was jist a leetle startled, blame my eye-sight if I wa'n't. Some big gun of an Injin had come up behind me, and, fust I knew, clapt both of his hands right ontew my shoulders! I sprung, I tell ye, but 'twarn't no kind o' use. He had me fast, and sech an awful great chap as he was—stronger, oh, my! ten common Injins don't begin to have the strength he had! I tried, once or twice, to git away from him, but seen it was no go. Then I tried suthin' else. I jumped back and made at him with my knife the best I knew how. That was foolisher yit. It was out of my hand in a jiffin, and I only expected to feel it in my back every minit.

"The red-skin seemed to be considerin', and while he was doin' that, I managed to give him a good kick on the shin. An Injin is jist as tender thar as a nigger, if not a leetle more so. This kelp what I took that feller made his hand a leetle onstiddy, and I broke away from him. If ever I used my legs it was jist then."

"I thought the Injin had your knife," remarked Walter, seeing the weapon in his belt.

"So he had, at that time. But let me go on with my story," said Barney, with the utmost coolness. "I started off on a keen run, and the red follered me. There warn't much difference atween our runnin, now't I'd barked his shin, but he gained a leetle, dew my best. I began tew see that it would not dew, for I'd started right for the fire, and in jist no time I should be whar it was light as day. I kinder stopt, for I didn't know jistly what to dew. My good fortin' allers favors me, for I stept in a kinder hole, and fell down. Afore I could move, the old Injin he comes along, stubbed his toe over me, and down he fell. Suthin' hit me on the hand, and kinder hurt, as he went over me. What should it be but my knife!

"Didn't I grab it quick, and scrabble to my feet, hey? I'll bet I did! I warn't up a bit sooner than the Injin was, but I had two advantages. He hadn't the knife and I had, and he stood atween me and the fire, so I could see how to work to good advantage. I gin him a taste of the cold steel through one hand fust, but one ain't two, and never was. While I was fixin' out that one, he brought t'other round, and gin me a whelt over one ear that laid me on the ground about the quickest. For a second I didn't know any thing to boast of, but I come to my senses as I found myself on the ground, and throwed the point of my knife up. I couldn't see, but I had a suspicion that the great ungainly critter was comin' down ontew me. So he was, and he come with sech tremendous force that the knife went slick in up to the handle in his jacket.

"Then he seed that he was done for, and the Injin began to crop out round. He got his hands ontew me, and bore me down like a ton of cold iron, for he was heavy, and yelled like mad. I knew it wouldn't do for me to be found in sech company, for an Injin runs at every yeli there is, and so I began to git loose. That warn't no small job, but I rolled the old feller off, finally, as he's about breathin' his last, and then I began to pull on my knife. How to git that out I didn't know, but I wouldn't think of leavin it 'cause there might be more occasion for me to use it. Finally, I rolled the old

feeler over, and stepped both feet onto him, and that way I managed to fetch her out.

"I reckined by this time the Injins had bizness enough on hand for the rest of the night, and I left 'em. I came down by the prison, and I seen you'd cleared it out, so I took on arter ye. But by some means I missed the ravine, and got out the upper side of it. Bein' a little confused with the knock I'd had on my head made some difference, I suppose."

During this time, the party had kept up their quick pace, which they could do while listening to Barney's relation. As they well knew, he was a little fond of embellishing his own adventures quite as highly as they would bear, and in this case there would be no restraint, as he had been alone in the adventure; each one, therefore, regarded the story with that amount of credulity which their acquaintance with the relater warranted.

They had made good progress, and the maidens were beginning to feel quite exhausted, when they came to a mountain-torrent, whose pure, cool waters dashed along with a most inviting murmur.

"Hadn't we better stop here and rest a few minutes?" suggested Walter, who saw that the girls were quite exhausted by their long and toilsome tramp.

"I think so," returned Maurice. "What say you, Ada and Fanny? We must rest soon."

"If it be not too dangerous," said the former, hesitatingly.

"I don't think 'twill," said Walter, as he took a disjointed drinking-cup from his pocket, and proceeded to fit it. "Least-ways, we must rest sooner or later, and if we're goin' to be overwhelmed by the Injins we'd better be in some condition to meet 'em; that's my idee."

"It's a very good one, my lad," said Barney. "Secin' these femayles air along, we've got to be tender of 'em, that's sartin."

He cast an impressive glance at Ada as he spoke, but she was busy with the cup of water which Walter had handed to her, and did not notice the look.

The little party seated themselves along the bank of the stream, and the limited allowance of food which Walter and Barney retained was divided among the five. True, it was

scarcely more than an aggravation, but it was their all. Scant as it was in quantity, and negative, at least, in quality, it was received with thanks and eaten with heartfelt gratitude.

No sooner was the repast swallowed than Barney took his way to the rear, that he might apprise them of any danger which should threaten from that direction.

"I shan't stay more'n a minit or two," he said; "but jist take a scout around, and see if any red-skins are in the way. Then I'll come back, and by that time you'll be rested enough to start up again."

He left them, and taking a circuitous route, soon disappeared from the narrow scope of their vision. Confident in his discernment, they relapsed into a cheerful conversation, which had lasted but a few minutes when the sound of hasty footsteps was heard.

Maurice and Walter both sprung to their feet. They beheld Barney returning at the top of his speed. On beholding them, he waved his hand and made demonstrations not to be mistaken.

"There are Indians about," exclaimed Maurice. "I know it by Barney's actions. He has seen them, and they are nigh, or he would not hesitate to speak!"

A scene of confusion at once followed. The maidens were overwhelmed with consternation at the idea of falling into their hands again.

"We shall certainly be killed!" exclaimed Ada. "They must have been so aggravated by the loss they have suffered in their own town——"

"Never fear," said Maurice, taking her hand within his own for a moment; "you shall not fall into their hands again if it be possible for us to defend you, and I think it is. We will show the Indians a specimen of such fighting as never astonished them before!"

Did she believe it because *he* said it? At all events her face lighted up at the assurance, and she seemed to firmly count upon success in case of conflict.

Just at that moment Barney bounded in among them. His flushed and excited appearance showed that he had been thoroughly alarmed by what he had seen.

"Quick!" was his exclamation, as he met the anxious faces

turned toward him. "The Injins are on hand, hosts of em! We've got to show 'em our heels till we git to a better place for fightin' than this, at least. Come on, right up this way; 'tis the safest!"

He darted up the stream, taking care to select the hardest ground, that their footsteps might not reveal them. The others followed close behind him, and in a very few moments the party had passed from sight. They found the ground rough and stony, with rocks of considerable magnitude appearing some distance above them. There were many places of seeming security, but Barney passed them all, still holding to his course with a speed which taxed the powers of his companions to the utmost.

But they struggled bravely, and not one thought of giving up the race till they reached such a stand-point as would enable them to combat the red-men to advantage should they follow.

"Don't git tired!" said Barney, cheerfully. "I know it's a tough pull, but I happen to hev' a place in my mind's eye—one that I diskivered when I was up here last year. I didn't know we's so near it till I started to look for the red imps, and then I soon found that we could use it to good advantage, if we can only git there."

"How far may it be?" asked Maurice, who was almost dragging Ada along, while Walter was performing a similar office for Fanny.

"Oh, not fur; I can't say; likely quarter of a mile more; may be suthin' over."

"How many of the Indians should you think there might be?"

"I didn't count 'em; hadn't time. Should say I seen ten or a dozen, and of course there's more back in the woods. We can't kalkilate nothin' on numbers, 'cause the fust shot might bring up a dozen or two more that would be in hear in'."

"Of course the whole village will be on our trail, and it would almost seem miraculous if we should escape without fighting them, sooner or later."

"You'll hev' fightin' enough if they track us up here," returned Barney, with a shake of the head. "They won't"

forget the lessons they've had in the last twenty-four hours ; not if my name is Barney Brooks, and I reckon 'tis ?"

Before any farther words passed, a quick exclamation from one of the maidens and an ejaculation from Walter, caused the others to turn their faces behind.

The darting of dusky forms over the rocks and among the trees below revealed the fact that the savages were upon their trail, and almost within rifle-shot at the present moment.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT FOLLOWED.

"THAR they come, the red-faced, painted imps!" Barney exclaimed, with a variety of other adjectives not exactly adapted to type. " Luckily we've got a'most there ; come on—show yer best speed now, for ye'll lose yer hair if ye don't, course ye will !"

To say that every one did his best would be utterly superfluous. People have a way of doing more, and making greater exertions when their lives are in deadly peril than at any other time, and our party was no exception to the common rule. Though greatly exhausted, they scrambled along, climbing the steep hill-side with an expedition which certainly surprised their pursuers, who had no idea that they were seeking a natural fortress from which to give them battle.

" Ye see that long rock jist above ye," shouted Barney, as he pointed to a long, high ledge, rising grandly above them. " That's the place ; jist git thar and ye're all right—safe as a frog in a mud puddle !"

Another moment and they had reached the promised shelter, exhausted and almost fainting. But it was not a moment too soon, for just then a bullet from one of the foremost Indians struck the broad rock with its quick thud.

The maidens at once threw themselves upon the earth, while the men grasped their weapons and prepared to give their mortal foes a bloody welcome. The place had been

especially fitted by nature for the defense of a few against the many.

The broad ledge was of peculiar form, rising perpendicularly to the height of some ten feet upon all four of the sides. Opening from the southern side was a rift or chasm in the ledge, extending from top to bottom, and describing the quarter part of a circle in its form. At the mouth it was so narrow that only one person could enter at a time, and even then could not see what might be beyond him in the chasm.

"What do ye think of this?" Barney asked, as they were fairly within the rock-bound retreat. "Don't you think we can stan' 'em suthin' of a pull in here?"

"I should think so," returned Maurice. "All that I should fear is their coming up over the rock."

"They may try that in the end," was the confident reply; "but it won't be their fast move. Till we git tired of the fun, seems to me we'd better keep 'em at a distance. It will save our ammunyshun, and make 'em a leetle more bashful."

"As you see fit."

"Then I'm goin' tew pick off that feller on ahead. Now jist watch him, for I ain't the best shot in the territory with a rifle—I'll own that!"

The savages were scrambling along up the hill, which was quite steep, and their long tramp predisposed them to take things easy. There must have been fifteen of them, at the least, though no one thought of counting them. One, with more zeal than the others, and he to whom Barney had reference, was striding along in disregard of his fellows, and climbing the hill several yards in front of them. He was a youthful savage, and bore a gun, while most of his party only boasted a bow and arrows.

Not more than fifty yards intervened when Barney leveled his gun, and fired with deliberate aim. They had all looked to see him fall in his tracks, but it was not so. His left arm dropped quickly to his side, and with a wild howl he turned back, fleeing rapidly to the sheltering presence of his brethren. To one of them he gave his gun, and then a halt and putting together of heads ensued.

The Indians were puzzled. It was evident that they were

not to accomplish their designs without resistance, and that of the most perilous nature.

At length they separated into two bands, one striking around to the left, and the other making a circuit to the right. It seems they supposed the fugitives to be behind the rock, and had no suspicion of the snug retreat whence the first shot of the conflict had been fired.

Barney had reloaded his rifle with all speed, and when he saw the movement just recorded, exclaimed :

"I'll crawl up onto the rock and watch the motion of them fellers around here, while you keep an eye on the other body. I'd advise ye not to let 'em come any nearer than ye kin pick 'em off with yer rifles, and on'y use the guns; keep yer pistols till time o' need. That's the way I'd dew, and if we don't whip 'em off in the long run, call me a fool!"

He gained the top of the rock with some effort, and his appearance elicited a bullet from the Indians, which passed without harm. But Barney did not retreat. He threw himself upon his face and worked his way along till he could obtain a view of the Indians upon their march. They had taken the precaution to make a wide circuit, and were looking anxiously for the whites, whom they expected to discern cowering behind some corner of the great buttress.

Barney, seeing that they intended no immediate demonstration, slid back to his companions. The body of savages going to the left, and comprising the principal part of the gang, had moved around till they came abreast of the singular opening, where they had halted. A suspicion, perhaps very near the truth, seemed to have crossed their minds; and they were evidently debating with themselves in what manner they should proceed.

"Do ye s'pose ye could wing one on 'em?" Barney demanded, as he noticed their movements. "S'pose you gin him a specimen of your skill, Walt."

"It seems a'most like murder," Walter replied, looking at his weapon and then at the huddled savages.

"It does, eh? Well, I know it does; it is murder, one way o' speakin'. But I'd like to hev' ye tell me what they'd do with us if they had the chance!"

"I suppose they would kill us if they could!"

"Yes, that's what they'd do. *Now* you can take yer choice—kill or be killed; by-and-by you can't, may be."

Walter realised that his companion was right in what he said, and he slowly brought his rifle to bear upon the dusky group. He fired, almost at random, and one of the Indians fell to the ground. His leg seemed broken, for he gave fearful yells as his comrades dragged him away hastily, and endeavored to screen themselves from the aim of the fearful enemies whom they could not see.

"There's another imp out o' the way!" exclaimed Barney, whose rough nature reveled in the scene. "If I only had that eye for a rifle that you have, Walt., I wouldn't mind a year or two's free work."

Finding that there was no immediate danger from the savages in their front, the besieged party now turned their attention to those who had gone off in the opposite direction. Barney, who seemed the head of the party, immediately climbed upon the rock, and proceeded to reconnoiter.

In a few moments he crept back, and peered over the edge.

"We are gittin' in fur it," he said. "There's ten of the painted imps out here now, and there was but five when they sot out! Must be the sound of the guns that brought 'em up."

"And the same cause is quite as likely to bring fifty more," said Maurice.

"Then let 'em come," said Barney, rubbing his hands with delight. "While there's a chance we'll be makin' their numbers beautifully less; that's my idee. These fellers hev' got up near enough, so I think a little piece of my mind wouldn't be entirely lost on 'em."

He crept back, and in a few moments the report of his rifle was heard. A yell from the savages followed, and one or two arrows went gliding over the rock, one falling into the chasm.

"Give me yer gun, Walt.," he said, reappearing at the edge of the rock. "I've laid over one of 'em, and they've plugged me in the leg with one of their cussed arrers. But that don't seem to satisfy 'em; so I'll give 'em one more corap!-men."

He took the gun which Walter handed up to him, and again disappeared from the sight of those beneath. In a moment another sharp rifle-crack broke from his weapon, and was answered by a shot from the Indians, the ball humming over the rock at a safe elevation.

"Give me another gun!" exclaimed Barney's voice, as he again made his appearance. "They're comin' up, but I'll match 'em yit!"

Walter had just succeeded in reloading the rifle, and at once returned it to him.

"You'd better look out t'other way, Bryant, while he's loadin' up!" Barney suggested, as he moved away with the fresh weapon.

In a moment his third shot was fired, and as he saw the effect a low cry of satisfaction broke from his lips.

"Good!" he exclaimed, as he once more appeared. "I've laid out three of 'em runnin', and the rest hev' concluded, like wise men, to rest a bit on it. So they're makin' all haste to git away from here!"

Just as he spoke came the sharp notes of Maurice's gun, answered by the never-failing yell from the other body of Indians. Immediately afterward Maurice appeared, somewhat agitated, yet firm and determined.

"They are all coming with a rush," he said, pointing over his shoulder. "We shall have to give them a reception with our revolvers."

He directed Ada and Fanny where to retire, so that they might be as much out of the way as possible, and then hastened back, pistol in hand. Barney saw the coming Indians from his elevated position, and he quickly slid down, first upon Walter's shoulder, and then upon the ground.

They were somewhat surprised upon seeing an arrow sticking in the fleshy part of his leg, but Barney paid no heed to it, save to pluck it out and cast it upon the ground.

"Now give me your gun, Walt," he said, "for I've no pistol, and jist let me git one good crack at 'em afore they git in!"

He took the weapon and made his way, limping somewhat to the center of the crevice, whence the savages were in full sight. He raised the weapon and fired; then stepped quickly

back, in time to avoid the hail of arrows which hurtled through the retreat, but without injuring any one.

"I lost the shot!" he exclaimed sullenly. Then, in a more encouraged tone, he continued: "Give me your bullets and I'll be loadin' the guns!"

They had scarcely complied with the request when the Indians, with a yell and rush, began to enter the opening. It was a trying moment, but the two brave young men were equal to the crisis. They had found a tolerable shelter behind two large stones which seemed providentially placed there, and with unfaltering nerve they met the savage onset.

Maurice was first, and his pistol rung out a sharp death-knell to the foremost. A second had entered just behind him, and no sooner was he uncovered by the fall of his file-leader, than Walter met him in like prompt manner with a bullet through the body.

So warm a reception as this was quite sufficient to dampen the ardor of those who stood next in order, and they turned back in time to avoid a third shot. Just outside the entrance they paused for some moments, and then gave a fresh yell. **But they made no immediate assault.**

Several minutes passed, and another Indian came cautiously stealing along, with a gun before him, ready to fire as soon as he should discern any mark. But eyes as keen as his, with the advantage of position, watched for his coming, and a sharp detonation laid him beside his brethren.

The fury of the savages increased in proportion as they found that they were unable to reach the fugitives whom they had supposed almost within their murderous grasp. They gave vent to their dissatisfaction in yells and howls, but for some time made no further attempt upon the stronghold. Whether they were concerting some plan, or only hoping to awe the whites by their persistence and hideous cries, the latter had no means of knowing. They had taken the opportunity to see all their weapons carefully reloaded, and remained upon the watch for any secret plan of the savages.

They labored under one disadvantage. It was possible, though not easy, for the Indians to scale the rock in other places, which operation the whites could not witness from their present situation. Once upon the rock, the savages

would have a comparative advantage over those below them. Barney had turned his especial attention to this particular branch of the operation, and he now fancied he heard a scrambling sound, as though the attempt was being made. He immediately mounted upon a stone, and, with musket in hand, raised his head above the rock.

At the same moment a yell and dash from the front announced that some plan had been perfected.

As before they were instantly met by the sharp fire of revolvers, and with a like result. Two of their number fell, and the balance fled precipitately. But this was not all. Ah, no! The Indians had been planning and scheming during their temporary inactivity, and a dreadful blow befell the gallant whites in consequence.

Barney Brooks had mounted the stone, as before stated, for the purpose of making an examination of the rock above. He heard the whoop of those at the entrance, but heeded it not, for he saw something else. Three Indians, two of whom had guns, had already reached the summit of the rock, and were hastening forward, with their guns leveled at the mysterious abyss before them.

Upon getting a glance at Barney's head, as it appeared above the rock, both of them fired. One ball went aside, but the other was, ah, too true! It struck the gallant white—who, despite his other faults, had proved brave and trusty in the moment of peril—just above the eye, passing directly through his brain!

Without a word or gasp, he fell back upon the rocky earth, while his murderers, with fiendish cries of exultation, pressed forward to complete their work. But they found stern men still in the rocky chasm!

Maurice and Walter heard the report of the guns, but just at that moment they were quite busy with affairs of their own. When they saw that their foes had really given up the assault for the time—and all these events had occupied but a moment—they turned to learn the state of affairs behind them. Imagine their anguish and dismay at beholding their trusty ally lying upon his back, with the life-blood trickling slowly from his shattered forehead!

CHAPTER XII.

"OUT OF THE JAWS OF DEATH."

FOR a few moments the scene of confusion and distress within the chasm was so great that any prompt action on the part of the Indians would have been quite likely to have resulted in their complete success. But they were in too much awe of their redoubtable foes to rush upon them unprepared. Those upon the rock fell to a hasty reloading of their pieces, and those at the entrance began to climb upon the rock beside them. As this could only be done by stepping upon one another's shoulders and climbing to the summit, it was an operation requiring considerable time.

The maidens had been watching the movements of Barney Brooks with the utmost interest, and had witnessed his untimely fall with the most terrible consternation! Despite the danger which might threaten, they rushed to his side, only to see that the fatal bullet had done its work all too surely.

"Oh!" groaned Ada, "he is killed—dead! We are lost—all of us! What shall we do?"

"You must go back," said Maurice, firmly. "We can not help Barney now, but we can take care of those lives which are left. Come!"

He led the maidens quickly back to the end of the recess, and here his quick eye caught sight of something which he felt might be made serviceable to them. The end of the rift was closed by an overhanging rock, which formed a dark, gloomy recess, almost shut out from the world by solid walls of rock.

As he hastened back to the place where he had left his companion beside the dead body of Barney, he could hear the scrambling of Indians as they continued to gain the top of the ledge. From these indications he felt sure they could not retain their former position, especially since they had lost the ardent services of Barney.

Taking Walter by the arm, he pointed in the direction he

wished to go. The other understood the sign, and picking up the guns they retreated quite leisurely.

"What do you think of this?" Maurice asked in a whisper, as they gained the place.

"I think it's better!" said Walter, decidedly, as he glanced around.

"Then stay here, and if an Indian shows his head do your best to perforate it. I am going to bring in the body!"

He took his revolver, ready for instant use, and went forth. He reached the place, raised the body, and carefully removed it to the retreat where they were to make the last desperate stand. Very strangely, as it seemed to him, the Indians had forebore to follow up their murderous success, and now the whites were fully prepared for them again.

"Now we wait your pleasure, Mr. Indian," said Maurice, standing with rifle to his shoulder, ready for the first foeman who should appear. "We don't intend to speak to you without effect—not at all. You have killed one of our number, but we don't intend that you shall repeat the operation."

His soliloquy was cut short by the appearance of a savage, who was looking over the edge of the cliff in evident amazement at the absence of the whites. Probably the mystery was solved to his satisfaction, for a ringing report ushered the Indian from the present to that which is to come. He fell like a lump of lead into the chasm beneath, but his place was at once supplied by another, who promptly discharged his gun in the direction whence the previous report had come.

But the bullet flattened harmlessly upon the rock above the party. Walter was prepared, and almost before the Indian's gun had ceased to recoil, the owner lay gasping in the chasm.

The savages now seemed satisfied of the whereabouts of the whites, but not so certain how they were to reach them. Something of a silence followed, and it was evident the Indians were planning further. How they would make their next attempt remained to be seen.

In the course of a few minutes Maurice fancied he heard a stealthy movement, and whispered as much to his companion. Walter already having heard it, was fully prepared for the new development.

"They are a-comin' up the ditch," he said, in a whisper, 'and goin' to take us with a rush!'"

"So they are—hear them!"

The maidens were cautioned to lie very low, out of the way of any chance shot, and the two brave defenders concluded to meet the onset.

It came. With a rush like the whirlwind, several Indians came rapidly around the curve in the chasm, but paused when they saw the darkness and gloom ahead of them. The pause was fatal.

Two rifle reports rung out through the gloom, and one of the foremost fell in a death gasp. The other bullet, by some chance, missed its mark. The Indians gave a yell, and rushed forward, with upraised weapons. The maidens uttered cries of terror, but they were swallowed up in the fierce crackling of revolvers.

The conflict was short and determined, but it was all upon one side. The whites were scarcely to be seen, but their repeating pistols kept up a blaze of light which confounded the savages, and stretched one after another of their number on the ground.

Still the braves were determined, and the sullen energy with which they rushed upon even certain death convinced Maurice that this was their final effort. If they should gain any advantage, woe to the whites! If, on the other hand, they should be defeated, they would withdraw from the spot, at least for the present.

Maurice saw this persistence of effort with well-founded anxiety. In such a close conflict they could not hope to reload their pistols, and when they should once be emptied, he felt that their advantage was at an end. He fired one more shot, but in the smoke and confusion missed the object of his aim, a tall, muscular brave. The Indian sprung forward, with knife in hand. Maurice felt that the decisive moment had come. He stepped back a pace and pressed the muzzle of his pistol close to the Indian's face. It only snapped, and the peculiarly sharp click of the hammer told that the weapon was empty!"

Now was the moment for the savage. He rushed in and closed with the white, knocking aside the blow which the

latter aimed at him with the empty pistol, and losing the opportunity, at the same time, to use his own knife. The next instant the two were whirling about in a death grip. The Indian was heavier, and he was powerful. Maurice had grasped the savage's right hand, containing his knife, and with the other rained a series of blows upon the bony face which was conveniently exposed.

But this was not to the Indian's liking. He pulled himself loose with a powerful effort, and rushed upon the white anew, seeking an opportunity to use his knife. By a strange coincidence, both of the antagonists stumbled at the same moment, Maurice going in one direction and his adversary in another. They recovered themselves simultaneously, and were upon the point of springing forward to a renewal of the conflict, for each felt that upon himself the fate of the contest depended.

Just at that moment, as Maurice braced himself against the wall and watched the every movement of the Indian for an advantageous opportunity, his hand rested upon something beside him which at once put a new phase upon affairs. It was Barney's gun, carefully loaded, of which neither of the whites had thought since the commencement of the struggle.

The young man grasped it in a moment, and raised the hammer with the same movement. He had an eye upon the savage, and at such close quarters it was not necessary to raise it to his shoulder. He merely leveled it at the brawny Indian's head, and pulled the trigger! His aim did not fail him this time, and, like a felled ox, the red-skin dropped upon the rock.

Clubbing the weapon, Maurice rushed to the assistance of Walter, who was valiantly struggling against two of the enemy. The youth was gradually falling back, for he was not armed to meet his red antagonists. But the arrival of Maurice changed the aspect of affairs. One of the Indians turned to flee, but fell with a crushed skull as he made the movement. The second was more fortunate, and reached the open forest in safety.

And he alone, of all the party which had made the assault, was uninjured! As he realized his safety, he gave a whoop,

but it was unanswered. Three or four of his brethren, who had been wounded, from time to time, crept from such shelters as they had found, and made up a small but sad procession toward their village home!

Maurice remained upon the watch till he saw the nature of the force which was assembling, and then he knew that no more offensive movements need be anticipated from them. Hastening back he sought those whom he had left behind when starting in pursuit of the two Indians. It was almost impossible to proceed along the narrow passage, so choked was it with the bodies of the fallen braves!

While picking his way along with care, for he disliked to step upon the bloody carcasses, he met Walter, who was coming forth to meet or seek him,

"So you're here, hey?" that individual said, as they met. "Whar be the Injins? and what's the prospect for another fight?"

"The Indian that I chased from the place is the only one in the gang that goes off with a whole skin, as you Western chaps would say!"

"No, guess not; that can't be. They're only hidin' round here some'rs to make another onslaught, I'll bet!"

"Then come, and I'll show you."

Maurice led the doubter back to the open air, and there was yet to be seen the doleful band—five in all—who were on their way to report the disaster to Eagle Nose.

"That's the beat of all—all I ever hearn on!" said Walter, as his eyes took in the scene.

"You're satisfied now as to what I told you?" Maurice asked.

"I can not doubt my own eyes!" was the wondering reply.

They hastened back to the presence of the maidens, who were almost frantic with the excitement under which they labored. The presence of their two preservers, safe among them, soon restored them to calmness, which was still more increased wher they learned the state of affairs without.

"If they are gone, let us, too, leave this dreadful place at once!" said Ada, most agitated of all.

"But here is poor Barney!" said Fanny, as she turned her

eyes upon the bloody and disfigured corpse. "What shall we do with the body?"

"We can not take it with us," said Maurice; "but we may bury it here. First we will help you out of this charnel-house, and then we will see what can be done."

They conducted the girls from the sickening spectacle, and seated them beneath a large oak. Then they turned to bring forth the body, when Walter remarked, hesitatingly:

"I feel a little lame in the shoulder, Maurice; I wish you'd take this handkerchief and tie it up a trifle!"

"Are you wounded?" three voices asked, in amazement.

"Only jist a bit. One o' them copper-colored critters gin me a punch in the shoulder; but it ain't of any account."

It proved quite a serious wound upon getting it bared, but the stout-hearted youth laughed at it, and declared that he could fight again as well as he had done.

They brought the body of Barney Brooks forth, and with such tools as they could extemporize, dug him a shallow grave beneath the old oak, even the maidens assisting in the preparation of his last resting-place, who had fallen in defending them!

The body was placed carefully in the narrow house, watered by heartfelt tears of sorrow, and then the earth was carefully replaced. The grave was secured as well as the circumstances permitted, for it was doubtful when, if ever, the body could be removed.

This last sad office performed, the party was now ready to set out toward Wharbuton again. It was getting to be late in the afternoon, and the morsel of food they had eaten during the day seemed only a pleasant memory. But they had no more, and until some game should cross their path they must make up their minds to fast. Nor would this be a task if, after their late experiences, they could pursue their way in peace.

They traveled until dark, and finding the way open, continued on for some distance by the feeble star-light. They felt an equal interest in placing the greatest possible distance between themselves and their foes.

As they rounded a small hill, which led down to the broad plain below, a score of fires burst upon the startled gaze on

the fugitives. They drew back in astonishment, uncertain whether they were to encounter friends or foes, but suspecting the latter.

"What shall we dew?" asked Walter; "we're right intew another big nest of 'em!"

"HALT! Who goes there?" sung out the sturdy voice of some one in the darkness, and the click of a musket-lock sounded fearfully distinct to their ears.

"Whites, who need your assistance and protection," replied Maurice, whose heart bounded with the thought that they were to be fugitives no more.

"Well, yeou jist stan'," returned the guard, "till I git word to the corporil."

A dapper little fellow, of the minimum size, soon appeared, and took a quick survey of the party. He then led them to the guard fire, with many apologies for keeping them in waiting.

Here every comfort that the men possessed was applied to their relief, and after two hours passed pleasantly among the interested soldiery, the ladies were shown to a tent which had been fitted up especially for their use.

In the morning they were aroused at an early hour, as the soldiery, who were *en route* to operate against the Indians, were to march. The commanding officer had taken an interest in them, for a dozen cavalry, with horses for the fugitives, were detailed to escort them to Wharbuton, where they arrived without further adventure.

They reached the place about noon, and to at least one home came an unbounded measure of gladness and relief. Every body thronged to hear the wonderful relation of their adventures among the Indians, and every body had a hundred questions to ask:

An expedition was fitted out two or three days later to go for the body of Barney Brooks, who was more praised now than at any previous time. The very fact that he had died bravely, fighting the common enemy, was justly allowed to cover the many faults of his past life. He was buried with tearful thanks that his life had ended thus nobly, and his grave made one of the many green mounds which sprung up in the little burial-ground of Wharbuton.

A late letter before us from the plains speaks of a double marriage in the pleasant little village of Wharbuton, which had already been rebuilt where the Indian conflagration destroyed it. The reader need not be told who the parties to that double marriage were.

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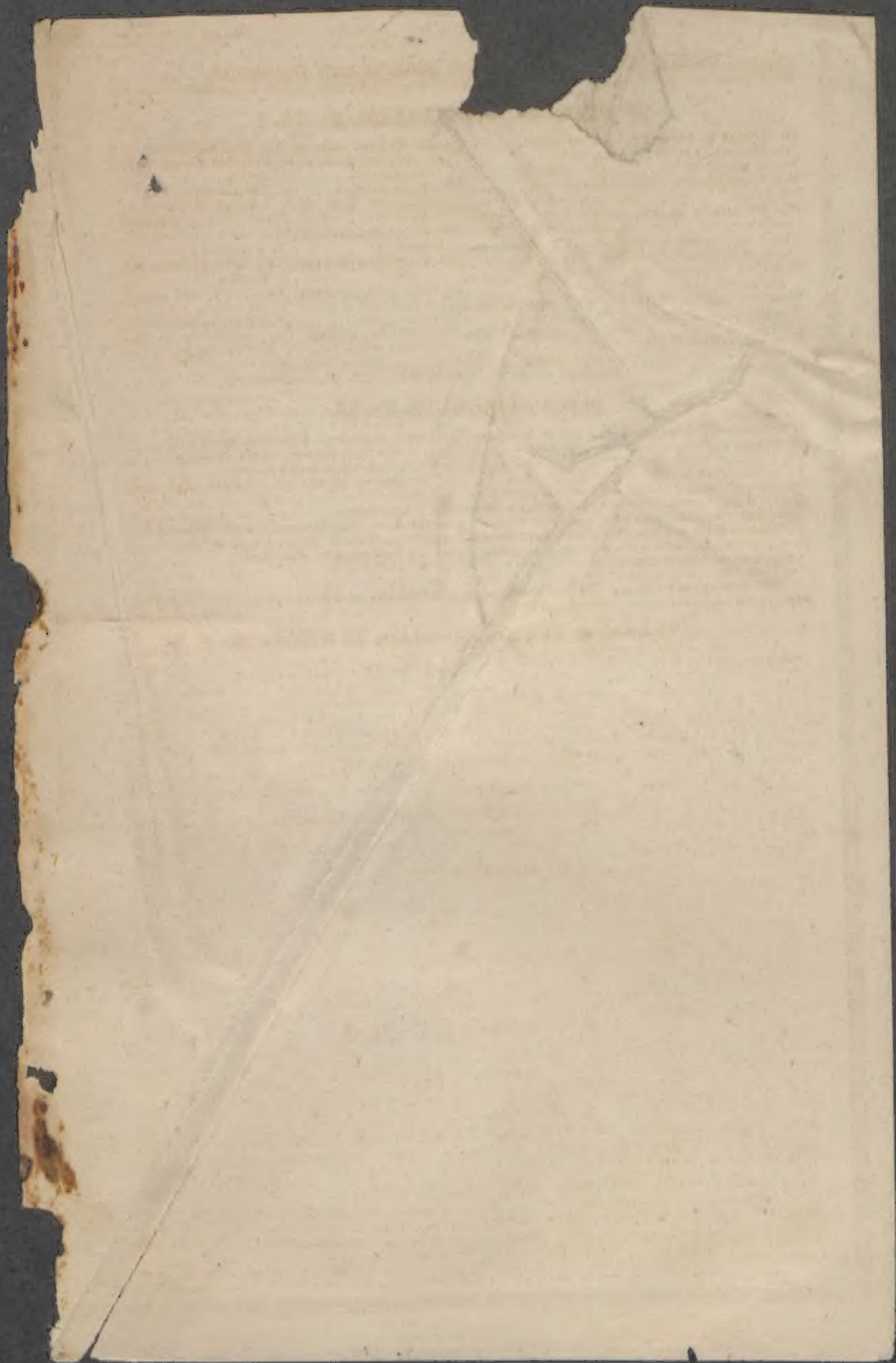
<p>Dat's wat's de matter, Tue Miss missippi miracle, Ven te tide cooms in, Duss lams vot Mary hat got, Pat O'Flaherty on wo- man's rights, The home rulers, how they "spakes," Hezekiah Dawson on Mothers-in-law, He didn't sell the farm, The true story of Frank- lin's kite, I would I were a boy again, A pathetic story,</p>	<p>All about a bee, Scandal, A dark side vlew, Te peasser vay, On learning German, Mary's skmall vits lamb A healthy discourse, Tobias a to speak, Old Mrs. Grimes, a parody, Mars and cats, Bill Underwood, pilot, Old Granley, The pill peddler's ora- tion, Widder Green's last words,</p>	<p>Latest Chinese outrage, The manifest destiny of the Irishman, Peggy McCann, Sprays from Josh Bil- lings, De circumstances ob de situation, Dar's naffin now under de sun, A Negro religious poem, That violin, Picnic delights, Our candidate's vIEWS, Dundreary's wisdom, Plain language by truth- ful Jane,</p>	<p>My neighbor's dogs, Condensed Mythology, Pictus, The Nereides, Legends of Attica, The stove-pipe tragedy A doctor's drubbles, The coming man, The illigant affair at Muldoon's, That little baby round the corner, A genuine inference, An invitation to de bird of liberty, The crow, Out west.</p>
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